



Daily Report

Friday, 13 June 2025

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 June 2025 and the information is correct at the time of publication (04:55 P.M., 13 June 2025). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Speeches

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[56958\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, with reference to his speech at the 2025 RUSI Annual Security Lecture on 29 May 2025, if he will list the (a) Ministers and (b) Government officials who approved the content of the speech; and whether Number 10 had advance sight of the speech.

Lucy Rigby:

The process was followed as set out in the Ministerial Code.

The Attorney General made a further statement on the speech in question which is publicly available.

■ Bhim Kohli

Mr Peter Bedford:

[\[58483\]](#)

To ask the Solicitor General, whether she has made representations to the Court of Appeal on the unduly lenient sentencing of those convicted of causing the death of Bhim Kohli.

Lucy Rigby:

The Law Officers have 28 days from the date of sentence to consider any requests received under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme for referral of a sentence to the Court of Appeal. I can confirm my department has received such referral requests in relation to the sentencing of two youths responsible for causing the death of Bhim Kohli. The deadline for any referral to the Court of Appeal is 3 July 2025. The hon. Member will be informed in due course of the Law Officers' decision.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Buses: Electric Vehicles

Noah Law:

[\[58545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using domestically sourced lithium in the manufacture of electric buses.

Sarah Jones:

The new Critical Minerals Strategy will set out how the government will maximise the domestic production of key critical minerals like lithium, for which the UK has significant projects underway. As part of this, the government will continue to engage

with downstream manufacturers- including the transport sector - to explore how the domestic production of critical minerals can support UK manufacturers.

Additionally, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) will support the Department for Transport (DfT) broader commitment to transitioning to zero-emission buses (ZEBs), which are central to delivering cleaner, quieter journeys and supporting UK manufacturing.

■ **Chemicals: Sanitary Products**

Martin Wrigley:

[\[57485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he is taking to help tackle the presence of (a) pesticides and (b) other harmful chemicals in period products.

Justin Madders:

Most period products are regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005, which requires all products to be safe and for consumers to be provided with information on the potential risks of a product.

Subject to Royal Assent of the Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, the Government has committed to consult on this matter to ensure that any changes to the safety provisions of these products are robust and consistent. As part of this, we are considering further research and testing in this area to complement the consultation.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Civil Servants**

John Cooper:

[\[57585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Justin Madders:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within business units or have returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day to day basis.

■ **Department for Business and Trade: Equality**

Tim Roca:

[\[57909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a (a) phased implementation and (b) grace period for the Equality and Human Rights Commission's revised code of practice for services, public functions and associations.

Justin Madders:

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has opened its consultation on the draft updated statutory Code of Practice, seeking views from affected stakeholders.

The Department for Business and Trade has made no assessment at this stage of the potential merits of a (a) phased implementation and (b) grace period for the EHRC's revised code of practice for services, public functions and associations.

We are sure the EHRC will make a concerted effort to fully explore the practical implications of the judgement and how this may be best reflected in the updated Code.

■ Employment: Republic of Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[58580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will hold discussions with representatives of businesses with government contracts on ensuring that UK residents who are entitled to a UK passport following the passing of the British Nationality (Irish Citizens) Act 2024 are not excluded from employment because they hold dual nationality.

Justin Madders:

None planned, as there is no DBT policy in relation to Govt contracts which differentiates treatment of UK residents who are entitled to a UK passport following the passing of the British Nationality Act 2024 from other UK residents.

■ Energy Intensive Industries: Finance**Perran Moon:**[\[57854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Energy Intensive Industries support scheme to include (a) metal manufacturing, (b) mining and (c) disposal of waste.

Sarah Jones:

The British Industry Supercharger already covers manufacturers of iron, steel, aluminium and other metals, and mining companies, subject to the business-level test on electricity usage. Iron and steel manufacturers may also be eligible for compensation on indirect carbon costs stemming from electricity generation. We will conduct an eligibility review for the British Industry Supercharger in 2026 to account for changing business trends.

■ Government Departments: Software**Samantha Niblett:**[\[58396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer on 4 June 2025 to Question 55787 on Government Departments: Software, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the Digital Markets, Competition and

Consumers Act 2024 on (a) software licencing and (b) the Government's procurement of software.

Justin Madders:

The Competition and Markets Authority has been awarded enhanced powers by the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers ("DMCC") Act 2024 to protect UK consumers and businesses from unfair or harmful practices by the very largest technology firms.

The DMCC Act enables the CMA to provide opportunities to encourage the benefits of investment and innovation from the largest digital firms, while ensuring a level playing-field for the many start-ups and scale-ups across the UK tech sector. This should promote greater innovation, more choice and more competitive process across the sector benefiting UK businesses, consumers and government.

■ **Postal Services: Rural Areas**

Perran Moon:

[\[57850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to improve postal services carried out by the Royal Mail in rural areas.

Justin Madders:

Ministers and officials have discussions with Royal Mail on a regular basis in its capacity as the universal service provider. It is for Ofcom, as the independent regulator of postal services, to set and monitor Royal Mail's service standards and decide how to use its powers to investigate and take enforcement action should Royal Mail fail to achieve its obligations without good justification.

The Government's objective in relation to postal services continues to be to secure a sustainable universal service for users throughout the UK, including those in remote and rural areas.

■ **Software: Licensing**

Samantha Niblett:

[\[58397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the new powers for the Competition and Markets Authority in the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 to tackle restrictive software licensing on (a) consumers, (b) businesses and (c) the wider economy.

Justin Madders:

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 has empowered the Competition and Markets Authority to designate firms which exert significant control in respect of digital activities with "Strategic Market Status" (SMS), following an evidence-based assessment.

The CMA can carry out investigations to determine the most appropriate remedies for a specific competition concern. Remedies will ensure designated firms treat businesses and consumers fairly, promote more dynamic markets and help new

competitors enter the market. The CMA has already exercised its new powers by launching three SMS investigations into large technology firms in January this year.

■ Spirit AeroSystems

Alex Easton:

[\[58123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if the Government will convene a meeting between (a) Boeing, (b) Airbus, (c) Bombardier, (d) GMB, (e) Unite the Union and (f) other relevant stakeholders on the proposed sale of Spirit AeroSystems, in the context of (i) its contribution to the UK aerospace sector and (ii) potential job losses; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of Government fiscal intervention in this matter.

Sarah Jones:

The Department for Business and Trade recognises the importance of Spirit AeroSystems' Short Brothers to the Northern Ireland economy, the wider UK aerospace sector and its future potential in the global market. Commercial negotiations are ongoing and the Department will continue to stay engaged with all parties to work for the best outcome and to support future growth.

Airbus' decision to expand its UK operations in Belfast and Prestwick will secure high value jobs and is welcome news for the UK's aerospace sector and a vote of confidence in Northern Ireland's and Scotland's world-class manufacturing expertise.

■ Trade Promotion: Israel

Martin Wrigley:

[\[56986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions he has had with the UK trade envoy to Israel.

Gareth Thomas:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with all his Trade Envoys.

■ Warehouses: Working Conditions

Lee Anderson:

[\[57338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps his Department is taking to improve working conditions for people who work in distribution centres.

Justin Madders:

Government cares about working conditions and employment rights, that is why we are delivering the Employment Rights Bill. The Bill will deliver significant benefits, including better working conditions, more secure work, reducing inequalities and improving industrial relations. Stronger employment rights for workers will ensure a fairer and more equal labour market. For example, over 2 million people on zero or low hours contracts could benefit from the right to guaranteed hours, and the right to payment for shifts cancelled, moved or cut at short notice.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Commissioner for Public Appointments**

Mr Peter Bedford: [57972]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the transparency of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Georgia Gould:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is a statutory office holder and provides independent assurance that public appointments are made in accordance with the government's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The Governance Code is built on the principles of ministerial responsibility, selflessness, integrity, merit, openness, diversity, assurance and fairness.

The Commissioner's functions are set out in the Public Appointments Order in Council. Under the Order in Council, the Commissioner must publish an annual report on public appointments. All annual reports, as well as the outcome of complaints and investigations, are published on the Commissioner's website.

■ Corporate Hospitality and Official Gifts

David Simmonds: [58282]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Register of Ministers' Gifts and Hospitality includes gifts that have been (a) returned and (b) reimbursed to the original donor.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Register of Ministers' Gifts and Hospitality is a declaration of hospitality received and gifts given and received in a ministerial capacity, in line with ministers' obligations under the Ministerial Code.

The Cabinet Office publishes guidance setting out the process that departments should follow to complete the publication of the Register of Ministers' Gifts and Hospitality:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministers-gifts-and-hospitality-publication-guidance/ministers-gifts-and-hospitality-publication-guidance>.

■ Freedom of Information and Written Questions: Costs

Mr Richard Holden: [57736]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2025 to Question 51450 on Freedom of Information and Written Questions: Costs, what the hourly rate of assessing staff time is for the Parliamentary Question disproportionate cost threshold.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

As set out in paragraph 219 of the [guide to Parliamentary work](#), the disproportionate cost threshold is set at 140% of the Freedom of Information cost limit for central

government, which is currently £600. The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 set out that costs for these purposes are to be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

■ Government Departments: Flags

Mike Wood: [\[58668\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the (a) transgender, (b) bisexual and (c) Windrush flag has been flown from a Government building since 4 July 2024.

Georgia Gould:

None of the listed flags have been flown from a Government Property Agency managed Government Building since 4 July 2024. We do not hold information relating to buildings not managed by the Government Property Agency.

■ Prime Minister: Public Appointments

Mike Wood: [\[58013\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Director of Policy, Delivery and Innovation is a (a) special adviser, (b) direct ministerial appointment or (c) member of the Number 10 Political Office.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Director of Policy, Delivery and Innovation is a special adviser. A list of special advisers is published as part of the Annual Report on Special Advisers by the Cabinet Office on gov.uk. The next report will be published in due course.

■ Prime Minister: Special Advisers

Mr Richard Holden: [\[57732\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who the lead policy official is in 10 Downing Street.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Director of the Policy Unit is the lead policy civil servant in the Prime Minister's Office.

■ Public Speaking

Stuart Andrew: [\[58007\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has issued any guidance to Ministers on attendance at public events featuring performers whose past public statements have raised concern among hon. Members.

Stuart Andrew: [\[58008\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has issued guidance on Ministerial attendance at public events that include performers whose previous public statements have raised concerns about the endorsement of violence.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Ministerial Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected of ministers. Ministers are personally responsible for deciding how to act and conduct themselves in the light of the Code and for justifying their actions and conduct to Parliament and the public.

Strategic Defence Review 2025: Information Officers

Mr Richard Holden: [\[57733\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the No10 (a) press office and (b) grid team were involved in releasing the Strategic Defence Review to the media.

Ms Abena Oppong-Asare:

The Strategic Defence Review was announced in Parliament on June 2 by my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence.

Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

Lee Anderson: [\[57692\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many young people he expects to (a) come to the UK from Europe and (b) go to Europe from the UK as a result of a youth experience scheme with the EU and UK.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

We have agreed that we will work towards the establishment of a balanced youth experience scheme with the EU. We have agreed that any scheme will be capped as well as time-limited. We have also been clear that it should be in line with the UK's existing schemes with countries like Australia and New Zealand. The exact parameters will be subject to negotiation, but any scheme will need to be in the UK's national interests.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Art Works: Public Bodies**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[57742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure greater transparency on the individual works of art displayed by public bodies from the Government Art Collection.

Chris Bryant:

The Government Art Collection contains over 15,000 works of art which are displayed in UK government buildings in the UK, and in more than 125 countries around the world. All artworks in the Government Art Collection are [listed online](#) and their locations can be searched.

■ Arts: Artificial Intelligence

Lee Anderson:

[\[57691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of AI on creative industries.

Chris Bryant:

The government has laid out its assessment of this issue in several debates this year and has published a consultation on the subject of AI and Copyright. AI is increasingly being used as a tool in the creative process, from music and film production to publishing, architecture and design. As of September 2024 more than 38% of Creative Industries businesses said they have used AI technologies, with nearly 50% using AI to improve business operations.

It may foster innovation and efficiency but it may also significantly disrupt the sector. Under the Data (Use and Access) Bill the government has committed to setting out a detailed economic impact assessment and a report on the use of copyright material for AI training. Our Secretary of State has also committed to a series of roundtables with DSIT Secretary of State Peter Kyle with representatives from across the CIs, to ensure our brilliant artists benefit in working with the AI sector to harness the opportunities this technology provides.

■ Film: Import Duties

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[57913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of proposed US tariffs on foreign-produced films on the UK film industry.

Chris Bryant:

There are no tariffs on the UK film industry, but we continue to monitor the situation closely and recognise the seriousness of this issue.

We continue to take a calm and balanced approach to our discussions with the US following our recent UK-US Economic Prosperity Deal.

The US and the UK have a special, mutually beneficial relationship, unique cultural and linguistic ties. Our film sectors are heavily connected, founded on decades of partnership and exchange.

Our commitment to helping our film and TV industry flourish remains absolute and it is important to maintain the conditions that allow our sectors to continue to flourish together and avoid measures which undermine these conditions.

Members: Correspondence**Freddie van Mierlo:** [\[58890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Henley and Thame of 13 March 2025 on the honours list.

Stephanie Peacock:

A response was sent to the hon. Member for Henley and Thame on Monday 9th June 2025. I apologise for the delay.

Music Venues: Finance**Mr Andrew Snowden:** [\[57766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 55112 on Music Venues: Finance, whether she plans to increase levels of Supporting Grassroots Music Fund funding beyond 2025-26; and whether she has considered creating a multi-year funding stream for grassroots venues.

Mr Andrew Snowden: [\[57767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 55112 on Music Venues: Finance, what steps her Department is taking to ensure equitable access to the Supporting Grassroots Music Fund in (a) Fylde constituency, (b) regions with fewer existing grassroots music venues and (c) all English regions.

Chris Bryant:

The Supporting Grassroots Music Fund is open to applications from rehearsal and recording studios, promoters, festivals, and venues for live and electronic music performance, from across the whole of England. Arts Council England supports and encourages applicants from across England including through its network of area-based relationship managers.

The Government and the live music industry are working together to drive progress on an industry-led levy on tickets for stadium and arena shows, to support grassroots music. We welcome commitments by artists and the wider industry to implement the ticket levy, and steps taken by industry to set up a charitable trust to distribute funds from the levy.

As part of the Spending Review 2025, the Government has announced a significant increase in funding for the Creative Industries. The Government's industrial strategy is prioritising the creative industries and we will set out actions to drive music sector growth in the upcoming Creative Industries Sector Plan.

■ Swimming Pools: Closures

Tom Hayes: [\[57871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of trends in levels publicly-funded swimming pool closures since 2019.

Tom Hayes: [\[57875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to introduce a national strategy for (a) community leisure provision and (b) swimming facilities.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises that sports clubs and facilities are important to communities up and down the country. High-quality, inclusive facilities help people get active. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to them and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Sport and physical activity, especially activities such as swimming, play a vital role in tackling the health challenges facing our nation through helping to treat and manage a wide range of health conditions. Swimming is not just a great way to get active, it is a fundamental life skill.

Sport England Active Places data evidences that since 2015 there has been a total of 291 swimming pool closures (on sites owned by Local Authorities), whilst there have been a total of 254 new swimming pools opened during this period.

We will continue to engage with Swim England, ukactive, and other key stakeholders to explore how we can work towards securing a vibrant future for swimming pools, enabling them to continue delivering their full potential for public health, economic growth, and the wellbeing of our communities.

The ongoing responsibility of providing access to public leisure swimming facilities lies at local authority level. We are committed to supporting Local Government, recognising the significant financial challenges faced by the sector and by ensuring that funding goes to the places that need it most through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

We do not have plans to set targets, as it is for local areas to determine what they need, but we believe that robust plans should be in place.

■ Swimming Pools: Repairs and Maintenance

Tom Hayes: [\[57866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help support councils to upgrade public swimming facilities.

Tom Hayes: [57867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps is she taking to increase access to affordable swimming lessons.

Tom Hayes: [57868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has considered making (a) swimming pool provision and (b) other leisure provision a statutory duty for local authorities.

Tom Hayes: [57869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of swimming pool closures on the ability of children to meet national curriculum standards for swimming by age 11.

Tom Hayes: [57870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support councils in upgrading aging (a) swimming and (b) leisure facilities.

Tom Hayes: [57872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the level of financial support available for publicly-funded swimming pools.

Tom Hayes: [57873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on funding for (a) leisure and (b) swimming facilities.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Government recognises that sports clubs and facilities are important to communities up and down the country. High-quality, inclusive facilities help people of all ages get active and provide vital facilities for children to learn to swim and about water safety. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to them and opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

The ongoing responsibility of providing access to public leisure swimming facilities lies at local authority level. We are committed to supporting Local Government, recognising the significant financial challenges faced by the sector and by ensuring that funding goes to the places that need it most through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Government encourages local authorities and local leaders to make investments which offer the right opportunities and facilities (including swimming pools) for the communities they serve, investing in sport and physical activity with a place-based approach, to meet the needs of individual communities. This is complemented by the support and guidance available through the Government's Arm's Length Body, Sport England.

Sport England tracks usage of swimming pools through [Moving Communities](#) to understand usage, including by children and by a user's home postcode, to build an evidence base on usage in areas of higher deprivation.

Sport England are closely monitoring swimming pool stock through their Active Places tool. This evidence shows that since 2015 there has been a total of 291 swimming pool closures (on sites owned by Local Authorities), whilst there have been a total of 254 new swimming pools opened during this period.

We will continue to engage with a full range of stakeholders to explore how we can work towards securing a vibrant future for swimming pools, enabling them to continue delivering their full potential for public health, economic growth, and the wellbeing of our communities.

All future funding of sports facilities beyond 2025/26 will be considered following the Spending Review and the Government will set out further plans in due course.

■ Swimming: Children

Tom Hayes:

[57874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to extend funding for (a) free and (b) subsidised swimming for children from low-income families.

Stephanie Peacock:

Local Authorities are responsible for swimming provision, taking decisions locally in line with local strategies and contractual positions.

Pupils have the opportunity at primary school to learn to swim and be safe in and around water. [The National Curriculum for Physical Education](#) states that all schools must provide swimming instruction in either key stage 1 or 2 and that pupils should be taught to:

- swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres
- use a range of strokes effectively (for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke)
- perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations

Primary schools can use their [PE and sport Premium funding](#) to provide top-up swimming and water safety lessons for those pupils that do not meet national curriculum requirements after they have completed core swimming and water safety lessons.

The Government believes that opportunities to play sport and get physically active should be available to everyone and we recognise that there are barriers which prevent some people from getting active. We are committed to breaking down the barriers that contribute to these persisting inequalities in participation and want to ensure that everyone can experience the physical, mental and social benefits that come with being active.

As part of this, Sport England's long-term strategy, [Uniting the Movement](#), prioritises tackling these longstanding inequalities, focusing on providing more support and more investment targeted towards least active groups.

Sport England also track usage of swimming pools through [Moving Communities](#) to understand usage levels by children and by a user's home postcode, to build an evidence base on usage in areas of higher deprivation.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Equality

Chris Webb: [\[57421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of implementing the Equality and Human Rights Commission's revised code of practice for services, public functions and associations on voluntary organisations.

Stephanie Peacock:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport welcomes the development of new guidance in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's code of practice that provides legal clarity and practical support for organisations to ensure that the rights of all are protected under the law.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is currently consulting on revisions to its code of practice for services, public functions and associations in light of the recent UK Supreme Court ruling in *For Women Scotland v the Scottish Ministers*. We encourage voluntary sector organisations that have an interest to participate in the consultation, which is due to close on 30 June 2025.

DEFENCE

■ Chagos Islands: Sovereignty

Dr Luke Evans: [\[57371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the 2.5% increase to defence spending on 25 February 2025 will fund the Chagos deal.

Luke Pollard:

The costs of the Chagos Archipelago Treaty will be met from within the FCDO and MOD budgets set out at the spending review. The NATO qualifying status of these costs will be considered in the usual way.

■ Defence Nuclear Enterprise

Derek Twigg: [\[58561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the expected change in cost for Defence Nuclear Enterprise until 2033.

Maria Eagle:

As stated in an update to the Public Accounts Committee in December 2023, the Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE) forecast an equipment plan spend of £117.8 billion over the period 2023-33. Over the same period to 2033, the current forecast for DNE equipment plan spend has increased by about £10 billion.

■ **Defence: Industry****James Cartlidge:**[\[58679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the Defence Industrial Strategy.

Maria Eagle:

This Government is committed to bringing forward a Defence Industrial Strategy which ensures the imperatives of national security and a high-growth economy are aligned.

The Defence Industrial Strategy will be published in the coming months.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid****Rachael Maskell:**[\[57644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has considered providing a sea route for humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Luke Pollard:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) leads on coordinating the HMG's humanitarian response to deliver lifesaving assistance to the civilian population in Gaza.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has provided military support when needed to facilitate the delivery of lifesaving assistance, including through providing support to the Cypriot Maritime Aid Corridor and the US' temporary pier initiative in 2024.

We continue to monitor the situation and consider what further assistance Defence could contribute to the HMG and international efforts.

■ **Global Combat Air Programme****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[58581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how long the Global Combat Air Programme development phase is expected to last.

Maria Eagle:

Work is ongoing with our GCAP Partners Japan and Italy to establish the core platform concept and set up the structures needed, ready to launch the Development Phase in 2025.

The programme's ambition remains to deliver an aircraft into service from 2035, and the detailed milestones will be agreed following completion of the Concept and Assessment phase.

■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Servants

John Cooper: [\[57562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

AI Carns:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their business units or, for example, have returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis.

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

Mr Mark Francois: [\[58598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to answer Question (a) 56739, (b) 56740 and (c) 56741 on Strategic Defence Review, tabled on 3 June 2025.

Luke Pollard:

I responded to the right hon. Member's Questions 56739 and 56740 on 11 June 2025 and to Question 56741 on 10 June 2025.

■ Reserve Forces

Ben Obese-Jecty: [\[57778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to increase the Army Active Reserve numbers by 20 per cent.

AI Carns:

As the SDR has recommended, it is our intention to increase the UK's Active Reserve forces by at least 20 per cent.

We recognise the need to adopt a whole of society approach to defence and the requirement for defence in depth. We are committed to growing the reserves. This will be part of an integrated approach to growing all of Defence's Reserves. We are looking hard at policies to ensure we can meet the intent when funding allows. In the meantime, we are making better use of the resources available already by urgently reinvigorating how we engage with those ex-Regulars who have a mobilisation obligation (the Strategic Reserve), and reviewing our Reserves model. We are also improving recruitment and retention within the Active Reserves through more flexible careers, better accommodation, and more stable, family-friendly postings.

■ Strategic Defence Review

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[57780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take in order to implement Recommendation 1 of the 2025 Strategic Defence Review.

Luke Pollard:

This Government is endorsing the vision and accepting all 62 recommendations in the SDR, which will be implemented. We are developing a new Defence Investment Plan to deliver the SDR's new vision. We will ensure the Plan is deliverable and affordable, considers infrastructure alongside capabilities, enables flexibility to seize new technology opportunities, and maximises the benefits of defence spending to grow the UK economy. This will supersede the old-style Defence Equipment Plan. This will deliver the best kit and technology into the hands of our frontline forces at speed and, importantly, invest in and grow the UK economy. The Defence Investment Plan will be completed in Autumn 2025. Another key factor in success in the coming years will be the Defence Reform programme which is driving the deepest defence reforms for 50 years. The SDR recognises that one cannot succeed without the other and that where the SDR states what Defence must do in the next decade and beyond, Defence Reform will ultimately determine how, and how successfully, it is delivered.

Sarah Bool:

[\[57936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department took to consult with service (a) personnel and (b) veterans during the development of the Strategic Defence Review 2025.

Al Carns:

The MOD issued a call for evidence, explicitly inviting responses from military personnel and veterans that saw 1,700 individuals provide over 8,000 responses. We also conducted an internal survey to gather additional insights from those currently serving which saw 800 responses. The Review and Challenge Panels also included serving and retired military personnel.

■ Submarines: Crew

James Cartlidge:

[\[58774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 6 of the Strategic Defence Review: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad, published on 2 June 2025, how many crew are required to staff the announced production of up to 12 submarines.

James Cartlidge:

[\[58787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 6 of the Strategic Defence Review: Making Britain Safer: secure at home, strong abroad, published on 2 June 2025, when he plans to produce the first attack submarine.

Maria Eagle:

The SSNA Programme is currently in the detailed design phase, which includes determining crew numbers. The aim is to deliver the first UK submarines into service in the late 2030s to replace the current Astute-Class vessels.

■ **Veterans: Housing****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[57712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2025 to Question 54377 on Veterans: Housing, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using data from Op Fortitude to undertake a review of the supply and demand of single occupancy housing for veterans.

Al Carns:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 June 2025 to Question 57385.

Attachments:

1. Veterans: Housing [57385 - Veterans Housing.docx]

■ **Veterans: LGBT+ People****Helen Maguire:**[\[57954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to include specific reference to LGBT veterans in the Veterans Strategy Action Plan.

Al Carns:

This Government acknowledges the historic policy prohibiting homosexuality in the Armed Forces was regrettable, wrong and completely unacceptable. We are currently developing a new Veterans' Strategy to be published later this year. It will be inclusive of the needs and experiences of all veterans, including the LGBT community.

EDUCATION■ **Adoption****Perran Moon:**[\[57844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve therapeutic continuity for adoptive families.

Janet Daby:

The department has supported therapeutic continuity in a range of ways. Therapy which began in 2024/25 could continue into 2025/26 for up to 12 months under transitional funding arrangements. Applications may continue to be made for therapy lasting up to 31 March 2026. The eligibility criteria for the adoption and special guardianship support fund have remained stable, enabling children to continue receiving therapy. The department has also maintained the range of therapies which may be funded.

■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund

Perran Moon:

[\[57843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 May 2025 to Question 49523 on Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund, what her planned timetable is for making available the equalities impact assessment.

Janet Daby:

The equalities impact assessment will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses as soon as possible.

■ Apprentices

Pippa Heylings:

[\[56946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of Level 7 apprenticeships in helping people to attain higher-level qualifications while in paid employment.

Janet Daby:

The department knows that level 7 apprenticeships can open up opportunities for young people, supporting them to begin careers as solicitors or accountants for example, and we are keen for this to continue. That is why, in line with our mission to break down barriers to opportunity, we will continue to fund level 7 apprenticeships for those under the age of 22, or those aged 22 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan or have been in local authority care. We are also encouraging more employers to invest in upskilling their staff over 22 to level 7 where it delivers a benefit to the business and the individual. This will enable apprenticeship opportunities to be rebalanced towards young people.

Gregory Stafford:

[\[57100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to introduce a national alternative to the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to ensuring every young person can develop the skills they need to succeed in work and life. We want them to have access to good quality careers advice as part of our mission to break down barriers to opportunity, under our Plan for Change.

Nationally, schools and colleges can access a range of digital and in-person support to help them inform their students about technical routes, such as apprenticeships. This support includes T Levels Ambassador Networks, the Skills for Apprenticeships support page (part of the government's Skills for Life – 'It All Starts With Skills' communications campaign), and The Careers and Enterprise Company's (CEC) resource directory.

Locally, through careers hubs, data and front-line insights support conversations about what is preventing take-up of technical and vocational pathways at the local level, enabling local partners to devise solutions. The government will continue to

invest in high-quality careers education for young people, including boosting skills pathways such as apprenticeships and other technical education routes.

We will continue investing in wider careers infrastructure, including careers hubs, to ensure successful implementation of our careers programme.

Careers hubs, supported by CEC, will continue locally to address barriers relating to apprenticeships and technical education awareness and uptake.

Victoria Collins:

[\[57823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of preserving full funding for Level Seven apprenticeships for (a) people from disadvantaged backgrounds, (b) career changers and (c) people returning to work after career breaks.

Janet Daby:

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity. From January 2026, the government will no longer fund level 7 apprenticeships, equivalent to master's degree level, except for young apprentices under the age of 22, or those aged 22 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan or have been in local authority care. This will enable apprenticeship opportunities to be rebalanced towards young people and create more opportunities for those entering the labour market, who need skills and training to get on in their careers.

This decision was informed by a wide range of evidence, including Skills England's analysis of official apprenticeship statistics and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Skills England's analysis found that level 7 apprenticeships have a higher proportion of older learners than other apprenticeships, a higher proportion of learners who already hold higher level qualifications, and a significant proportion are less likely to be deprived than those in apprenticeships at lower levels. It also suggested there was unlikely to be a significant or unavoidable fall in the supply of these skills in the long term, post-defunding.

We are encouraging more employers to invest in upskilling their staff over 22 to level 7 where it delivers a benefit to the business and the individual. It will be for employers to determine the most appropriate training. There are alternative training options available to employers at level 7, including non-apprenticeship routes.

■ Apprentices: Buckinghamshire

Callum Anderson:

[\[57512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of foundation apprenticeships on addressing sectoral skills shortages in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) Buckinghamshire.

Janet Daby:

This government's first mission is to kickstart economic growth. We know that we need to support employers to invest in skills training and fuel innovation in businesses across the country.

That is why we are transforming the apprenticeships offer into a new growth and skills offer, to support greater flexibility for employers and learners. Foundation apprenticeships are a key part of this offer. They will support employers in key sectors to meet their current and future skills needs by developing new opportunities to engage with younger employees and build pipelines of talent. This is expected to drive up to 30,000 apprenticeship starts across this Parliament.

The first foundation apprenticeships will be focused on industrial strategy and priority areas including construction, engineering, health and social care, and digital. This will begin in August with the introduction of seven new foundation apprenticeship standards, including three in construction, enabling young people to earn a wage while developing vital skills. We will continue exploring how to make foundation apprenticeships work in other sectors, such as hospitality and retail.

The growth and skills offer is informed by Skills England's engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure that levy-funded training meets the needs of employers and learners.

Callum Anderson:

[\[57513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support employer engagement with the apprenticeship programme in SMEs in Milton Keynes.

Janet Daby:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Buckingham and Bletchley to the answer of 19 March 2025 to Question [37179](#).

■ Apprentices: Finance

Gregory Stafford:

[\[57094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that employers are financially able to support level 7 apprenticeships in the context of the proposed funding changes from January 2026.

Gregory Stafford:

[\[57098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of withdrawing funding for level 7 apprenticeships for people aged 22 and over on workforce planning in critical public services.

Janet Daby:

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

From January 2026 the government will no longer fund level 7 apprenticeships, equivalent to master's degree level, except for young apprentices under the age of 22. This will enable apprenticeship opportunities to be rebalanced towards young people and create more opportunities for those entering the labour market, who need skills and training to get on in their careers.

This decision was informed by a wide range of evidence, including Skills England's analysis of official apprenticeship statistics and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Skills England's evidence suggested there was unlikely to be a significant or unavoidable fall in the supply of these skills in the long term, post-defunding.

We are encouraging more employers to invest in upskilling their staff over 22 to level 7 where it delivers a benefit to the business and the individual. It will be for employers to determine the most appropriate training. There are alternative training options available to employers at level 7 including non-apprenticeship routes.

Victoria Collins:

[57822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of removing funding for Level Seven apprenticeships for people aged 22 and above on (a) gender equality and (b) social mobility.

Janet Daby:

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity. That is why we are moving funding away from level 7 apprenticeships for learners aged 22 and over, to ensure that funding is prioritised for learners at lower levels, who need the skills and training to progress in their careers.

This decision was informed by a wide range of evidence, including Skills England's analysis of official apprenticeship statistics and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Skills England's evidence suggested there was unlikely to be a significant or unavoidable fall in the supply of these skills in the long term, post-defunding, and alternative routes are well supplied. A significant proportion of level 7 apprentices are from non-deprived backgrounds and are significantly less likely to be deprived than apprentices at lower levels.

Women are slightly less likely to be represented in the 16 to 21-year-old cohort of level 7 apprenticeships starts than those aged 22 and over. This is likely to be due to the recruitment norms in the standards that have a higher proportion of starts in the 16-21 age group, such as accountancy. The department will monitor trends over time and consider how this gap could be narrowed.

■ Apprentices: Loans

Amanda Martin:

[57111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing student loans for apprentices.

Janet Daby:

Apprenticeships are jobs with training, allowing apprentices to earn a wage whilst getting hands-on industry experience. Apprenticeships training is funded by the government and by employers, meaning that apprentices do not have to pay towards the cost of their training. For this reason, apprentices are not eligible for student

finance, but we remain committed to ensuring that apprentice wages support the attraction of talented individuals into apprenticeships.

On 1 April 2025, the Apprentice National Minimum Wage (ANMW) increased by 18% to £7.55 per hour, from £6.40, which will help to encourage more young people to upskill via apprenticeships. Apprentices under 19, or aged 19 and above and in the first year of their apprenticeship, are entitled to the ANMW. In all other cases, apprentices must receive at least the correct national minimum wage for their age, although many employers choose to pay more than the minimum.

This government also wants to ensure that more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds can undertake apprenticeships. We continue to pay a bursary of £3,000 to apprentices under the age of 25 who have been, or are, in local authority care. The bursary is paid in instalments over the first year of the apprenticeship, supporting care leavers as they transition into employment.

■ Apprenticeships

Connor Naismith:

[\[57516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to review the age cap on funding for (a) Level 6 and (b) Level 7 apprenticeships.

Janet Daby:

This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

From January 2026 the government will no longer fund level 7 apprenticeships except for young apprentices under the age of 22. This will enable apprenticeships opportunities to be rebalanced towards young people and create more opportunities for those entering the labour market, who need skills and training to get on in their careers.

Level 6 apprenticeships will continue to be funded for all ages (16+) by the government.

■ Armed Forces: Schools

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[57466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to develop understanding of the armed forces among young people in schools.

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[57467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing Cadet Forces into secondary schools within the state sector.

Catherine McKinnell:

Cadets can be an excellent opportunity for enrichment and welcomes the Ministry of Defence (MoD)-commissioned University of Northampton report which explores the benefits of a cadet unit in schools, which is available [here](#):

<https://www.northampton.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/institute-for-social-innovation-and-impact-cadets-report-2025.pdf>. Cadet Forces offer challenging and enjoyable activities for young people, preparing them to play an active part in the community while developing valuable life skills.

The department works jointly with MoD on the Cadet Expansion Programme, which was launched to establish new cadet units in English state secondary schools. We will continue to work with MoD as they implement the Strategic Defence Review's recommendation to expand in-school and community-based Cadet Forces.

We will also work with MoD on the Strategic Defence Review's recommendation to increase understanding of the Armed Forces in schools in a way that creates opportunities.

MoD will review existing support with us over the coming months and in consultation with teachers. Schools themselves are best placed to determine how to use this available support.

■ **Asylum: Special Educational Needs**

Katie Lam: [54526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many asylum seekers aged 25 years and under require special educational needs provision.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department does not hold or collect information regarding how many asylum seekers aged 25 and under require special educational needs provision.

■ **Boarding Schools: State Education**

Jim Shannon: [57236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children have attended state boarding schools in each of the last five years.

Catherine McKinnell:

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

The number of children who have attended state boarding schools in each of the last five academic years in England, broken down by school phase type, is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/719c18b6-84ce-419b-a84a-08dda25bd6a4>.

The department publishes information of schools, pupils and their characteristics annually. The latest data can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2024-25>.

■ Children in Care: Discrimination

Rachael Maskell: [\[57646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of making care experience a protected characteristic.

Rachael Maskell: [\[57647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will set the minimum grant for young people leaving care to set up home at £3000.

Rachael Maskell: [\[57648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help care leavers to secure employment following education.

Rachael Maskell: [\[57650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will ensure that young people with care experience have support available from local authorities until the age of 30.

Janet Daby:

The department is committed to tackling stigma and discrimination faced by care-experienced children and young people. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will introduce corporate parenting responsibilities for government departments and other relevant public bodies. This will ensure corporate parents are aware of issues that could negatively impact on children in care and care leavers.

The leaving care grant for care leavers was increased from £2,000 to £3,000 from April 2023.

To support them to engage in education, employment, and training, care leavers are entitled to a £3,000 bursary for apprenticeships and a £2,000 bursary for university. They are also prioritised for the 16-19 bursary in further education.

Over 600 businesses, including John Lewis, Sky, and Amazon, have signed the department's care leaver covenant, offering employment and training opportunities. The government's civil service care leaver internship scheme has provided over 1,000 paid jobs across government. Care leavers who access Staying Close will receive support to engage in education, employment and training.

The government currently has no plans to extend support to care leavers to age 30.

■ Children in Care: Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[57651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that people with care experience have direct access to mental health services.

Janet Daby:

The Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care are updating guidance on promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children to ensure children in care and care leavers receive necessary health services and

mental health support. This guidance sets expectations for local authorities, health service commissioners, the NHS, and others to promote physical, emotional, and mental health, including early intervention.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill aims to improve access to health services by enhancing information sharing between agencies and considering the needs of looked-after children. Measures include improving data sharing with a Single Unique Identifier and introducing new corporate parenting responsibilities for government departments and public bodies, to create a culture of support and break down barriers to good outcomes. Finally, the government will expand Mental Health Support Teams in schools to provide early support for young people.

■ Children: Care Homes

Lauren Edwards:

[58484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to implement recommendation 1 of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings, published in October 2022.

Stephen Morgan:

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's recommendations for safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings were set out in their phase 2 report published in April 2023. Recommendation 1 concerned the provision of specialist non-instructed advocacy services.

The department is determined to improve the provision of advocacy services. We will publish updated statutory guidance on the provision of effective advocacy services under the Children Act 1989 and updated national standards for children's advocacy services, later this year. The latter will include a new standard on non-instructed advocacy for children with complex needs and learning disabilities and new requirements for advocacy services in the safeguarding of children.

The government set out this information, including its commitment to publishing revised National Standards on Children's Advocacy, in the report 'Tackling child sexual abuse: progress update' which was published on 8 April 2025 and is available on the government's website.

■ Chronic Illnesses: Children

Juliet Campbell:

[57431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support parents looking after ill children (i) in the long-term and (ii) immediately after diagnosis.

Catherine McKinnell:

This government is committed to properly supporting pupils with medical conditions, and their parents, at home and school. As per Section 97 (3b) of the Children's and Families Act 2014, parent carers have the right to request an assessment of their

need for support from the local authority. Having been assessed, Section 17 (10b) of the Children's Acts 1989 makes provision for a child whose physical or mental health is impaired, as well as his or her family, to receive the appropriate support services from the local authority.

■ **Classroom Assistants: Finance**

Tom Hayes: [\[57865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether funding allocations through the National Funding Formula will allow headteachers to maintain levels of teaching assistant support.

Catherine McKinnell:

The overall core schools budget is increasing by £3.7 billion in the 2025/26 financial year, meaning that it will total £65.3 billion, compared to £61.6 billion in the 2024/25 financial year. This is a 6% overall increase, which against the backdrop of a challenging fiscal picture, demonstrates the government's commitment to enabling every child to achieve and thrive through delivery of the Opportunity Mission.

This total includes part of the additional funding announced on 22 May to support schools with the cost of staff pay in the 2025/26 financial year, including for the 3.2% local government pay offer in respect of support staff.

Headteachers are ultimately responsible for employment of teaching assistants in their schools, as they are best placed to understand the specific needs of their pupils and make staffing decisions accordingly. To help them to do so, we will support schools to benefit fully from the tools we already offer to benchmark and integrate resourcing and curriculum planning, such as the Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool. We will also introduce a new toolkit to support schools to adopt evidence-based deployment model.

■ **Classroom Assistants: Pay**

Tom Hayes: [\[57857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure fair pay for teaching assistants.

Tom Hayes: [\[57858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve the retention of teaching assistants who support children with SEND.

Tom Hayes: [\[57859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of (a) pay freezes and (b) real-terms wage reductions on the teaching assistant workforce.

Tom Hayes: [\[57862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to standardise access to high-quality (a) training and (b) continuing professional development for teaching assistants.

Tom Hayes: [\[57863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to introduce a national pay framework for teaching assistants.

Tom Hayes: [\[57864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) retention bonuses and (b) bursaries for teaching assistants.

Catherine McKinnell:

Teaching assistants play a vital role in children's education, including for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They are crucial to ensuring we give children the best possible life chances.

This government values and recognises the professionalism of the entire school workforce. That is why we are establishing the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) through the Employment Rights Bill, introduced in Parliament on 10 October 2024.

The SSSNB will mean that in future years, employers and employee representatives will come together to negotiate terms and conditions and pay for school support staff, including teaching assistants, to ensure they are properly recognised and rewarded for the work they do. The SSSNB will also be tasked with establishing a national terms and conditions handbook and advising on suitable training and career progression routes that recognise the varied and vital roles support staff undertake.

Most school support staff, including teaching assistants, are currently employed on National Joint Council (NJC) for local government services pay and conditions. The NJC is a negotiating body made up of representatives from trade unions and local government employers. Employees covered by the NJC for local government services pay and conditions have been offered a pay increase of 3.2% from 1 April 2025, which is subject to agreement by the recognised NJC unions. The government does not play a role in this process.

■ Classroom Assistants: Recruitment and Labour Turnover

Tom Hayes: [\[57860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teaching assistants since 2020.

Tom Hayes:

[\[57861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teaching assistants have left the profession in the last year; and what estimate her Department has made of the cost to schools of this turnover.

Catherine McKinnell:

Teaching assistants play a vital role in children's education in schools across the country.

The school workforce census shows that the full-time equivalent (FTE) of teaching assistants has increased each year since 2019/20, rising to 288,800 in 2024/25. This is an increase of 5,900 since 2023/24.

A December 2024 departmental survey entitled 'School and college voice' found that a large majority of leaders (82%) reported recruiting teaching assistants or learning support staff since January 2024. However, these roles were commonly reported as the hardest to fill.

■ **Construction: Skilled Workers**

Dame Harriett Baldwin:

[\[56200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Spring Statement 2025, published on 26 March 2025, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding for (a) improving skills and (b) increasing recruitment in the construction sector in the context of trends in apprenticeship retention rates.

Dame Harriett Baldwin:

[\[56201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of skilled workers entering employment as a result of construction skills funding in the Spring Statement 2025.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to addressing skills shortages in the construction sector and supporting workforce growth. In the Spring Statement 2025, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a £625 million investment to train 60,000 skilled construction workers by 2029, supporting the delivery of 1.5 million homes and economic growth. This includes £165 million for college construction courses, £100 million for ten new Technical Excellence Colleges, and £32 million via the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) for 40,000 industry placements annually.

From August, new foundation apprenticeships, backed by a £3 billion apprenticeship budget, will launch, with construction among the key sectors. Employers will receive £2,000 for each foundation apprentice, and three new construction standards will be introduced. CITB is also expanding its New Entrant Support Team, while partnerships like the Persimmon Homes Academy are improving retention and progression.

In addition, the department recently announced over £190 million in additional funding for 16 to 19 education in 2025/26, including £160 million for colleges and £30

million for school-based provision. This is in addition to construction-specific skills funding.

To further support teaching capacity, we are expanding initiatives such as Taking Teaching Further, targeted retention payments, and a £20 million Teacher Industry Exchange scheme, promoting collaboration between further education providers and construction employers.

■ Education: Finance

Neil O'Brien:

[\[54342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding she plans to provide to (a) the National Careers Service, (b) the Education and Training Foundation, (c) WorldSkills UK and (d) the Careers and Enterprise Company in the 2025-26 academic or financial year.

Janet Daby:

As part of our Plan for Change, the government is investing in skills in order to drive economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity. The overall programme resource budget for apprenticeships, further education and higher education in the 2025/26 financial year is £15.8 billion. This includes funding for the National Careers Service, the Education and Training Foundation, WorldSkills UK, and the Careers and Enterprise Company.

■ Financial Services: Education

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[57711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with schools on ensuring that financial education for pupils includes (a) the impact of social media on managing money, (b) managing money in the context of accessible credit and (c) different types of (i) credit and (ii) debt.

Catherine McKinnell:

Financial education forms a compulsory part of the national curriculum for mathematics at key stages 1 to 4, and citizenship at key stages 3 and 4. Together these cover personal budgeting, saving for the future, managing credit and debt, and calculating interest. Statutory relationships, sex and health education and computing lessons equip pupils to be discerning in evaluating digital content, including content they see through social media.

The interim report from the independent Curriculum and Assessment Review noted the consistent call from children and young people and their parents for more focus on the applied knowledge regarding financial education. The Review's final report and recommendations will be published in autumn with the government's response.

■ Foster Care: Recruitment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to recruit foster carers.

Janet Daby:

Currently, there are 10 regional fostering programmes active across England, collaborating with over 60% of all local authorities to recruit and retain foster carers. This government is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to recruit more foster carers.

As part of my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Transformation Fund announced in the Spring Statement, we will provide an additional £25 million over two years (beginning in 2026/27 and 2027/28) for foster care, as part of children's social care reform. This is on top of the £15 million of fostering investment that was announced in the Autumn Budget 2024, to cover investment taking place in 2025/26. This funding is to start work to ensure every local authority has the offer of access to a hub and to embed the existing regional fostering recruitment and retention hubs.

The hubs will transform the way people who are interested in fostering are supported and rollout the Mockingbird programme, which offers peer-support to foster carers and the children in their care. The department is also funding 'Fosterlink', a support service for local authority fostering services.

■ GCSE: Dyslexia

Sarah Gibson:

[\[57882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of allocating marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar in non-English GCSE subjects on students with dyslexia.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer the hon. Member for Chippenham to the answer of 12 June 2025 to Question [57812](#).

■ GCSE: Newbury

Mr Lee Dillon:

[\[57919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department is providing to schools to ensure that at least 50 percent of children achieve passes in (a) maths and (b) English GCSEs in Newbury constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

In the 2023/24 academic year, 69.7% of students in the Newbury constituency achieved a grade 4 or above in both English and mathematics, and 49.5% of students achieved a grade 5 or above in both subjects.

High and rising school standards, with excellent foundations in reading, writing and mathematics, are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

To drive standards in reading and writing, the government has committed £27.7 million in the 2025/26 financial year. This includes new training and resources for secondary school staff to support reading in key stage 3, with a specific focus on readers who are at risk of falling behind. The department's English Hubs programme also supports the teaching of phonics, early language development and reading for pleasure. Newbury's nearest English Hub is Whiteknights English Hub.

To drive standards in mathematics the department funds the Maths Hubs programme, supported by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. Local maths hubs provide school-to-school support focused on mathematics subject knowledge and pedagogy training for teachers in primary and secondary schools. The Newbury constituency is served by the Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Maths Hub, which reports participation from 85% of schools from within its region.

■ Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Jess Asato:

[57800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the children who will now receive free school meals will also be eligible for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

Stephen Morgan:

This government has taken another step towards delivering our Plan for Change with our announcement that all children in households in receipt of Universal Credit will be eligible for free school meals (FSM) from September 2026. This unprecedented step will put £500 back into families' pockets and lift 100,000 children across England out of poverty, breaking down barriers to opportunity and tackling the scar of child poverty across our country.

Giving children access to a nutritious meal during the school day also leads to higher attainment, improved behaviour and better outcomes, meaning children get the best possible education and the best chance to succeed in work and life.

The government remains committed to the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme to ensure children can benefit from enriching activities and healthy meals during the school holidays too. Local authorities already have flexibility to use up to 15% of their HAF funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related FSM, but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF provision.

We are providing more than £200 million funding for the HAF programme this year. Further to the spending review, once the departmental business planning process has concluded, we will confirm details of HAF funding beyond the current financial year.

■ Kinship Care

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[57218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle disparities in (a) financial allowances, (b) access to legal aid and (c) other forms of support available to kinship carers arising from (i) different kinship care arrangements, (ii) the level of social services involvement and (iii) levels of kinship care support between local authorities.

Janet Daby:

The government announced a £40 million package to trial a new kinship allowance, which will begin in autumn 2025. We will evaluate the pilot to build an evidence base on how best to deliver financial support for kinship families.

Through the Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill, we are enshrining the first definition of kinship care in law and mandating local authorities to publish their kinship local offer, increasing their accountability for ensuring all kinship families are getting the information they need.

As set out in statutory guidance, local authorities must publish the support and services available to kinship families in a clear, accessible way. This includes the legal support that may be available to kinship carers and potential kinship carers, including the eligibility and extent of that support.

The government also created the National Kinship Care Ambassador role to advocate for kinship families. The appointee, Jahnine Davis, works with local authorities to help them improve their kinship practice and local policies and ensure they are following national guidance.

The department funds the charity 'Kinship' to deliver over 140 peer support groups and a training package that all kinship carers across England can access for free.

■ Learning Disability: Assessments

Edward Morello:

[\[57965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure (a) early and (b) accurate assessments of learning disabilities in children.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department wants to drive a consistent and inclusive approach to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) through early identification, effective support, high-quality teaching and effective allocation of resources.

The department knows that effective early identification and intervention can reduce the impact that SEND may have on individuals in the long term. The Early Years Foundation Stage two-year old progress check and the Healthy Child Programme development review offer two valuable opportunities to identify additional needs for children aged two to three and put the right support in place for the children who need it.

The department has also introduced additional resources for early years educators to support children with developmental differences and needs, including a free online training module and SEND assessment guidance and resources.

To support settings to identify need early, the department is also strengthening the evidence base of what works to improve early identification in mainstream settings. The department has commissioned evidence reviews from University College London, which will highlight what the best available evidence suggests are the most effective tools, strategies and approaches for teachers and other relevant staff in mainstream settings to identify and support children and young people (age 0 to 25) with different types of needs.

■ Learning Disability: Rural Areas

Edward Morello: [\[57962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to increase levels of support to help schools in rural constituencies meet the needs of pupils with learning disabilities.

Edward Morello: [\[57963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to increase the level of support available to help schools meet the needs of pupils with learning disabilities in West Dorset constituency.

Edward Morello: [\[57964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to allocate new funding to help schools improve support for pupils with learning disabilities.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department recognises the essential role that small, rural schools play in their communities. The national funding formula (NFF) accounts for the particular challenges, including those of providing for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), faced by small schools in rural areas through the lump sum and sparsity factors. The NFF lump sum for the 2025/26 financial year is set at £145,100 and provides a fixed amount of funding that is unrelated to the number of pupils in a school. In addition, eligible small, rural primary schools attract up to £57,400, and eligible secondary or all-through schools attract up to £83,400, in sparsity funding in 2025/26 through the NFF.

Where the cost of additional support for a pupil with SEN exceeds £6,000 per annum, the local authority provides the school with extra funding from its high needs budget. The department is providing £1 billion more for high needs budgets in 2025/26, bringing total high needs funding to over £12 billion, to help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting their pupils with complex needs. Of that total, Dorset County Council is being allocated over £60 million through the high needs funding block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), an increase of £4.1 million on the 2024/25 DSG high needs block, calculated using the high needs NFF.

■ Learning Disability: Wiltshire

Sarah Gibson:

[57883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) improve the academic outcomes of students with learning difficulties in Wiltshire.

Catherine McKinnell:

For too long the education and care system has not met the needs of all children, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with parents struggling to get their children the support they need and deserve. This government's ambition is that all children and young people with SEND or in alternative provision receive the right support to succeed in their education and as they move into adult life.

The department and NHS England have been supporting local areas to improve their SEND service delivery for a number of years. This includes a monitoring, support and challenge relationship following an inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Where a local authority does not meet its duties, we can take action that prioritises children's needs and supports local areas to bring about rapid improvement.

Wiltshire's Ofsted and CQC Local Area SEND inspection, carried out in October 2024, identified positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The report, which was published on 6 December 2024, included no Areas for Priority Action and highlighted that children and young people with SEND typically benefit from personalised provision delivered by dedicated staff from across education, health and social care, and when children and young people transition into school practitioners have a shared vision and commitment to inclusion.

Officials from the department and NHS England meet regularly with partners from the local area, including health, education, agencies, parent/carers, children and young people representatives, to review and reflect on the SEND services.

■ Local History: Education

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[57447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support the teaching of local history in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

The national curriculum provides a broad framework within which schools have the flexibility to develop the content of their own curricula. Local history is a compulsory element of the history curriculum across key stages 1 to 3, enabling schools to explore topics relevant to their communities. Historic England's Heritage Schools Programme, funded by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, provides

continuous professional development support and resources to help schools teach their local history.

The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review, chaired by Professor Becky Francis CBE. The Review wants to ensure a rich, broad, inclusive and innovative curriculum that readies young people for life and work. The Review Group published an interim report on 18 March, accessible at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-interim-report>.

The Review's final report with recommendations will be published in the autumn.

■ Multi-academy Trusts: Inspections

Perran Moon: [57853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department plans to take to enable the inspection of multi academy trusts.

Catherine McKinnell:

Inspection of multi-academy trusts is a complex proposal, and it is essential that we get it right to make the system fairer, more transparent and to enable direct intervention where necessary. The department is engaging with the education sector and working with Ofsted to support the development of our proposals.

We remain committed to bringing multi-academy trusts into the inspection system, as set out in the government's manifesto.

■ Nurseries: Schools

Ben Goldsborough: [57835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of full-time early years places at school-based nurseries.

Ben Goldsborough: [57836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make a comparative assessment of the potential impact of early years education in (a) schools and (b) non-school sites on educational outcomes.

Stephen Morgan:

It is our ambition that all families have access to high-quality, affordable and flexible early education and care, giving every child the best start in life and delivering on our Plan for Change.

The 2024 Department for Education Provider Survey shows that there were 322,000 registered places at school-based nurseries in 2024.

School-based nurseries are one part of this country's childcare and early years market.

Nurseries located on a school site can operate under different delivery models, such as nursery classes run by the school, a private, voluntary and independent (PVI)

nursery leasing space on a school's premises or operating on the school's behalf, or provision run by a childminder, or group of childminders, leasing space on a school premises.

School-based nurseries are more likely to be led by graduate qualified staff, which is associated with higher quality provision for children. Additionally, the benefits of school-based nursery provision, including transition to school, were highlighted by many teachers working in schools with a nursery in the Kindred Squared school readiness report.

■ **Postgraduate Education: Discrimination**

Connor Naismith:

[\[57517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether there is an external right of appeal for people who believe they have been discriminated against when applying for doctorates at universities in the UK.

Janet Daby:

Higher education providers (HEPs) are autonomous from government and are responsible for their own admissions decisions. The department has no legal remit to become involved in disputes between prospective students and their university.

Responsibility for handling applicant complaints and/or appeals, in the first instance, is a matter for the relevant HEP and each university has formal complaints and appeal processes.

If a complainant has exhausted the official process and the matter has not been resolved to their satisfaction, they are free to consider bringing a claim for judicial review or for discrimination under the Equality Act.

Another route available to dissatisfied applicants is through the higher education regulator, the Office for Students (OfS). While the OfS cannot become involved in individual complaints, applicants can notify the OfS if they think that a university has broken its conditions of registration.

■ **Pre-school Education**

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[57837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department has taken to compare best practice in (a) the UK and (b) other countries in the development of its policies on early years provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The department meets with Ministers and officials from across the UK and other nations to discuss developments, approaches and best practice in the provision of early education and childcare. International evidence, such as the OECD's Education at a Glance publication, is used to identify high performing and innovative early years systems and inform policy development. England is a member of the British-Irish Council, in which we actively engage to collaborate on a wide range of education

matters, including early education and childcare across the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Ben Goldsborough: [57833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how her Department calculated the funding rate for each (a) child and (b) age group for early years provision.

Stephen Morgan:

The hourly funding rate for the early years entitlements varies to reflect the costs of delivering provision to different ages. The department knows, from listening to the sector and from our own regular research, that the cost of delivery is highest for younger children due to tighter staffing ratios and, consequently, higher staff costs, as staffing makes up the most significant proportion of provider costs.

Each local authority receives an hourly rate for each entitlement, determined by the early years national funding formulae (EYNFF). The EYNFF targets funding to local authorities where it is needed most, reflecting the relative needs of the children and costs of delivering provision in that area. 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.

Further details of how early years entitlements funding is distributed, including a detailed methodology document on the EYNFF and operational guidance, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2025-to-2026>.

■ Pupils: Discipline

Laura Trott: [58267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to publish the national behaviour survey for the 2023-24 academic year.

Stephen Morgan:

The National Behaviour Survey for the 2023/24 academic year is due to be published in the summer.

■ Schools: Allergies

Sir Desmond Swayne: [58550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how the statutory responsibilities of schools for children with allergies are (a) monitored and (b) assessed.

Catherine McKinnell:

Governing bodies must ensure that the arrangements they put in place are sufficient to meet their statutory responsibilities and that policies, plans, procedures and systems are properly and effectively implemented. This includes the duty under Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to make arrangements for

supporting pupils with medical conditions and the duties under the Equality Act 2010. The effectiveness of a school is assessed through inspection by Ofsted.

Paulette Hamilton:

[\[58687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of current provisions for children with allergies in schools.

Catherine McKinnell:

Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units to make arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions. The accompanying statutory guidance makes clear to schools what is expected of them in taking reasonable steps to fulfil their legal obligations and to meet the individual needs of pupils with medical conditions, including allergies.

We will keep the statutory guidance under review as we take forward our commitment to delivering an inclusive mainstream system.

■ Schools: Admissions

James Naish:

[\[57430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure cross-border cooperation between local education authorities in the planning and allocation of school places.

Catherine McKinnell:

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is introducing new duties for mainstream state schools and local authorities to co-operate regarding school admissions and for state schools to co-operate with local authorities regarding place planning. Where co-operation breaks down or fails, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education will be able to intervene. This measure will help ensure that admissions and place planning decisions account for local communities' needs.

Local authorities, academy trusts and local partners should work together on place planning. We expect local authorities to share their place planning strategy and data with local partners, which can include neighbouring local authorities.

Local authorities are required to ensure that their scheme to co-ordinate admission arrangements for the normal admissions round considers the admission of pupils in different local authority areas where that is what parents wish. Where possible their scheme of coordination should be compatible with the coordination schemes of neighbouring authorities. Where local authorities receive cross border applications, we expect the authorities to work together to ensure families receive timely decisions on national offer day, at the highest preference school that can offer the child a place.

Schools: Newbury**Mr Lee Dillon:****[57920]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department is providing to schools that are having to reduce costs in Newbury constituency.

Catherine McKinnell:

Overall school funding is increasing by £3.7 billion in the 2025/26 financial year, meaning the core school budget will total £65.3 billion. This is a 6% rise in cash terms compared to 2024/25.

Schools in West Berkshire local authority are attracting £143.6 million through the dedicated schools grant. This represents an increase of 2.6% per pupil compared to 2024/25.

We are providing schools with an additional £615 million in the 2025/26 financial year to support them with the 4% teacher pay award and 3.2% support staff pay offer. Schools will be expected play their part in driving productivity across the public sector and find approximately the first 1% of pay awards by ensuring resources are deployed to maximise support for teaching and learning.

We are supporting schools to make savings and bring down operating costs. For example, 400 schools participating in the department's new energy offer are projected to save an average of 36% compared to previous contracts.

We are also working to secure better banking solutions and provide services such as Get Help Buying for Schools and the Teaching Vacancies Service to reduce procurement and recruitment costs.

We know workforce deployment is the biggest component of school budgets. We will support schools to benefit fully from the tools we already offer to benchmark and integrate resourcing and curriculum planning, such as the Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool. We will also introduce a new toolkit to support schools to adopt evidence-based deployment models.

Skills England**Mike Wood:****[53531]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether appointments to Skills England will be included in the Public Bodies Order in Council; and whether the chair appointment will be classified as a Significant Appointment.

Janet Daby:

The department will give due consideration on whether to request the inclusion of Skills England in the Public Appointment Order in Council at the point when the Cabinet Office invites departments to nominate bodies for inclusion in the Order. Concurrently, we will assess whether the Chair position falls within the scope of appointments deemed significant under the criteria specified by Cabinet Office at the time of the request.

■ Small Businesses: Apprentices

Sarah Gibson:

[57880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve support for SMEs to take on apprentices.

Janet Daby:

I refer the hon. Member for Chippenham to the answer of 19 March 2025 to Question [37179](#).

■ Special Educational Needs: Reform

David Smith:

[57610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has for reforming education, health and care plans for children with special educational needs; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that children who require additional support in school receive adequate levels of assistance, in the context of the provisions in the (a) Children and Families Act 2014 and (b) Special educational needs and disability code of practice.

Catherine McKinnell:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for North Northumberland, to the answer of 02 June 2025 to Question [54205](#).

■ Students: Loans

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57352]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 May 2025 to Question 50912 on Students: Loans, what steps her Department takes to help ensure that borrowers are adequately informed about (a) how interest accrues on student loans and (b) the potential impact of making minimum repayments.

Janet Daby:

When a borrower takes out a student loan, they are provided with the terms and conditions. These clearly set out the repayment thresholds, when a borrower will start repaying, how their repayments will be calculated, how interest is applied, and when the loan term ends. Details around the protections available for borrowers, including the fact that any outstanding balance will be written off at the end of the loan term, are also included. All student loan borrowers must confirm that they have read and understood the terms and conditions prior to signing the loan agreement.

Access to this information up front ensures that prospective students can weigh up the likely overall costs and likely benefits to them of undertaking higher education, alongside the financial cost of repayment across the length of the loan period.

For those who may still be unclear about the long-term commitment of a student loan, there is a range of guidance on student loans available from the Student Loans Company.

Student loan borrowers may make additional, voluntary repayments at any time, if they wish to reduce their loan balance sooner or repay their loan in full. They will need to consider their personal circumstances and the fact that any outstanding loan balance, including interest accrued, will be written off at the end of the loan term. Voluntary repayments cannot be refunded.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 May 2025 to Question 50912 on Students: Loans, whether her Department has considered (a) changes to interest rates, (b) changes to repayment thresholds and (c) other policy changes to help prevent loan balances from increasing despite regular repayments.

Janet Daby:

The government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university. The student finance system removes upfront financial barriers so that everyone with the ability and desire to enter higher education can do so.

Student loan debt is not like other debt. Monthly repayments depend on earnings, not on interest rates or the amount borrowed. No-one who earns under the student loan repayment threshold is required to make any repayments. At the end of the loan term, any outstanding loan balance, including interest built up, will be written off. This write-off is a deliberate investment in our people and the economy. No commercial loan offers this level of protection.

Furthermore, since August 2023, loans for new undergraduate borrowers have been issued on Plan 5 terms. These have an interest rate set in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI) measure of inflation. This means Plan 5 borrowers will not repay more than they originally borrow over the lifetime of their loans, when adjusted for inflation.

The department will set out longer-term plans for higher education reform as part of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper this summer.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 May 2025 to Question 50912 on Students: Loans, what comparative assessment she has made of the number of borrowers with increasing loan balances in (a) financial year 2024-25 and (b) previous financial years.

Janet Daby:

The number of borrowers whose loan balance has increased between the start and end of the financial year for the most recent four years is:

- 2024/25: 2,409,255
- 2023/24: 2,317,667
- 2022/23: 1,805,426
- 2021/22: 1,313,137

These figures cover Student Finance England loan borrowers only, whereas the previous number provided to Question 50912 included borrowers from all UK funding bodies.

These numbers include all borrowers whose loan balance has increased, regardless of the number of payments they have made across the financial year, whereas Question 50912 included only borrowers who made at least four payments across the financial year.

These figures cover Plan 2, 5 and 3 undergraduate and postgraduate loan borrowers funded by Student Finance England. For each of the financial years provided, the figure was generated by comparing borrowers' loan balances between 1 April at the start of the financial year and 31 March at the end of the financial year.

At the end of a borrower's loan term, any outstanding loan balance, including interest built up, will be written off. This write-off is a government subsidy and a deliberate investment in our people and the economy.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 30 May 2025 to Question 50912 on Students: Loans, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of persistent student loan debt on levels of social mobility among (a) graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds and (b) other graduates.

Janet Daby:

The system is designed to ensure that those who benefit financially from higher education contribute towards the cost of it. This is why repayments are linked to income and not the loan balance, with monthly repayments increasing with borrower income.

Student loans are not like commercial loans, as they carry significant protections for borrowers. Those earning below the repayment threshold repay nothing, and at the end of the loan term, any outstanding debt is cancelled. This subsidy is a conscious investment in the skills capacity, people and economy of this country.

Furthermore, student loan balances do not appear on borrower credit records.

A full equality impact assessment of how student loan reforms may affect graduates, including detail on changes to average lifetime repayments under Plan 5, was produced and published in February 2022 under the previous government and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[57356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that the student loan system does not entrench socioeconomic disparities for (a) first-generation university students and (b) students from lower-income households.

Janet Daby:

This government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university. The student finance system removes upfront financial barriers so that everyone with the ability and desire to enter higher education (HE) can do so.

All eligible students, regardless of their household income, can apply for up-front fee loans to meet the full costs of their tuition. Unlike commercial loans, student loans carry significant protections for borrowers. Monthly repayments are linked to income, not to the amount borrowed, and individuals are only required to make their contribution to the system when they are earning over the repayment threshold.

The government has announced that maximum loans and grants for living and other costs will increase by 3.1% for the 2025/26 academic year, with the highest levels of support paid to students from the lowest income families. A 3.1% increase is in line with forecast inflation based on the RPIX inflation index.

The department aims to publish our plans for HE reform as part of the Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy White Paper in the summer, and we will work with the sector and the Office for Students to deliver the change that the country needs.

■ Supply Teachers: Huntingdon**Ben Obese-Jecty:****[57470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the Government has spent on contracts with temporary teaching agencies for staff at schools in Huntingdon constituency since 5 July 2024.

Catherine McKinnell:

Supply teachers make an important contribution to the smooth running of schools across the country by filling posts on a temporary basis and covering teacher absences.

Schools and local authorities are responsible for the recruitment of their supply teachers and there are currently various approaches to providing supply teachers, including using agencies. Therefore, the department does not hold contracts with temporary agencies for staff at schools and does not hold the data requested.

The department collects financial data from schools across England through the Consistent Financial Reporting framework for local authority maintained schools, and through the Academy Accounts Return for academies and multi-academy trusts. The Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool reports on school and academy spend on supply teaching, including expenditure on agency supply teaching staff. This includes "costs paid to an agency for teaching staff that have been brought in to cover teacher absence". The Tool can be accessed here: <https://financial-benchmarking-and-insights-tool.education.gov.uk/data-sources>.

■ Swimming: Primary Education

Ian Roome:

[\[57496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the number of schools which do not meet their statutory duty to teach swimming and water safety during (a) Key Stage 1 and (b) Key Stage 2.

Catherine McKinnell:

Swimming and water safety lessons are compulsory at key stage 1 and 2 in the physical education (PE) national curriculum. Swimming and water safety are vital life skills, and every child should have the opportunity to learn to swim and know how to keep themselves safe around water by the time they leave primary school.

Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People Survey 2023/24 reports that 95.2% of state primary schools surveyed confirmed they do provide swimming lessons. The report also states that 70.2% of pupils in year 7 say they can swim 25 metres unaided. Ofsted inspections may include a deep dive into PE, in which case the inspector will consider how the PE curriculum has been designed, and whether the various requirements are met.

■ Swimming: Training

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[56930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2025 to Question 54071 on Swimming: Training, what provision is available for secondary school pupils to learn to (a) swim and (b) be safe around water.

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[56931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June to Question 54071 on Swimming: Training, what standard of swimming ability the government expects young people to have achieved by the end of Primary School.

Catherine McKinnell:

The programme of study for physical education (PE) makes specific reference to swimming and water safety, stating that "all schools must provide swimming instruction in either key stage 1 or 2" and that pupils should be taught to:

- Swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres.
- Use a range of strokes effectively (for example, front crawl, backstroke and breaststroke).
- Perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations.

Secondary schools are free to shape their PE curriculum, in line with the national curriculum, to suit all their pupils, but there is no statutory requirement to provide swimming lessons. At secondary, pupils should build on and embed the physical development and skills learned in key stages 1 and 2, and become more competent,

confident, and expert in their technique. Swimming and water safety lessons are one way of doing this.

Schools can also use their personal, social, health and economic education programme to equip pupils with a sound understanding of risk and with the knowledge necessary to make safe and informed decisions, which is a vital part of water safety.

The department is currently reviewing the statutory relationships, sex and health education curriculum, including looking at whether additional content on water safety should be added.

The department works closely with sector organisations like Swim England and the Royal Life Saving Society UK, supporting schools to provide swimming and water safety lessons through teacher training and resources. This includes support for pupils with special education needs and disabilities, hosted on Swim England's online Inclusion Hub.

■ Teachers: Foreign Nationals

Mr Will Forster:

[\[57599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will undertake a review of the requirements non-UK nationals face when applying to train to become an educator.

Catherine McKinnell:

The department keep the requirements for applying to train to be a teacher under regular review to ensure that the best candidates wherever they are from can continue to access the appropriate training to become great teachers.

In addition to the requirements that apply to all candidates, those from overseas will need to show that they meet the eligibility requirements to get a visa and demonstrate that their school and university qualifications are equivalent to the required standard of a UK Bachelor's degree and GCSEs (Grade 4) in mathematics, English and for teaching in primary schools science. They can do this by getting a statement of compatibility from the UK European Network of Information Centres.

■ Universities: Admissions

Sarah Gibson:

[\[57881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the publication entitled Skills England: Sector evidence on the growth and skills offer, published in June 2025, what steps her Department is taking to ensure vocational pathways are presented to young people on an equal basis to university routes.

Janet Daby:

The publication referred to sets out Skills England's findings from its analysis and engagement with sectors on the growth and skills offer, supported by its assessments of skills needs. Skills England and the department will work together to ensure the offer meets the needs of employers across the country.

Widening the apprenticeships offer into a growth and skills offer, including new foundation apprenticeships, will give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working life.

The department is investing in, and promoting, a wide range of non-academic routes to support young people into employment, including:

- T Levels, a high-quality technical education option for young people, including a valuable workplace industry placement which prepares them work.
- Higher Technical Qualifications, occupation-focused level 4-5 qualifications, approved and quality marked as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers.
- Skills Bootcamps, which give learners the chance to build sector-specific skills and include with a job interview on completion.
- Free Courses for Jobs, giving learners the chance to access high value level 3 qualifications.

There is also strengthened legislation to ensure all secondary pupils have multiple opportunities for meaningful encounters with providers of technical education and apprenticeships.

■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

Lee Anderson:

[57348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to defend the right to free speech on university campuses.

Janet Daby:

This government is absolutely committed to freedom of speech and academic freedom in universities. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, confirmed to Parliament on 15 January the government's plans for the future of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, which will create a more proportionate, balanced and less burdensome approach to protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech.

On 28 April, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State signed commencement regulations, bringing the following provisions into force from 1 August 2025:

- Strengthened higher education (HE) provider duties in relation to securing freedom of speech, academic freedom and promoting the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- A requirement for HE providers to put in place effective codes of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- A ban of non-disclosure agreements in HE for staff and students where there is a complaint about bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

- A requirement for the Office for Students to promote free speech, and enable it to give advice and guidance on it.

■ Universities: Student Unions

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[57705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department has issued to (a) universities and (b) students' unions on (i) conducting and (ii) the oversight of risk assessments for student-led (A) extracurricular and (B) off-campus activities.

Janet Daby:

Risk assessments are a legal requirement, and it is crucial for higher education (HE) providers and their affiliated student groups to comply with existing legislation and relevant guidance. This includes adhering to the Health and Safety Executive's guidelines for schools and education settings, any National Union of Students guidance and HE provider policies. Ensuring that risk assessments are conducted appropriately is essential to managing risks associated with student-led activities. Each HE provider should establish its own guidance and procedures to ensure compliance with these requirements.

■ Vocational Education

Adam Dance: [\[57813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to support the introduction of more (a) vocational and (b) functional education pathways for students in (i) Somerset and (ii) England.

Janet Daby:

The department continues to reform qualifications so they have clearer routes to higher education or skilled employment and are, where applicable, aligned to occupational standards designed by employers. 140 reformed qualifications at levels 2 and 3 have been approved for next academic year.

There are a wide range of technical and functional pathways in all areas of the country, including Somerset. These include:

- T levels, a high-quality technical education option for young people, including a valuable workplace industry placement which prepares them work.
- Higher Technical Qualifications, occupation-focused level 4-5 qualifications, approved and quality marked as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers.
- Apprenticeships, including widening the offer into a growth and skills offer which will include new foundation apprenticeships, giving more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working life.
- Skills Bootcamps, giving learners the chance to build sector-specific skills with a job interview on completion.

- Free Courses for Jobs, giving learners the chance to access high value level 3 qualifications.
- Functional Qualifications in English, mathematics and digital, available to learners for whom a GSCE is not the right qualification path, designed with employers in mind and taught depending on the needs of the learner.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Batteries: Storage

Helen Maguire:

[\[57955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with the British Standards Institution on the implications of Publicly Available Specification 63100:2024 for the installation of domestic battery storage systems; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the one metre clearance requirement in section 6.5.5 of that specification on the uptake in housing stock.

Michael Shanks:

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

Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 63100:2024 is a standard and not part of government regulation. The content of the draft standard was publicly consulted on and considered by the PAS Steering Group, which included battery manufacturers with an interest in ensuring rules are not unduly restrictive with regards to sale and installation.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Aberdeen

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[57249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many of his Department's jobs are based in Aberdeen; and how many additional Department roles will be based there once the UK has established its Energy Campus.

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[57250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, which departmental roles are based in Aberdeen; and what kinds of additional roles he expects to be located there following the establishment of the UK Energy Campus.

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[57251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what his planned timeline is for establishing the UK Energy Campus in Aberdeen; and over what period departmental roles will be transferred or created there.

Michael Shanks:

Aberdeen was announced as one of DESNZ's second headquarters in December 2023.

This commitment to the location underlines the importance of Aberdeen in our Net Zero planning.

As of May 2025, there were 100 staff members based in Aberdeen, comprising a wide variety of roles within the department. The ambition is to increase this number and for DESNZ to continue to grow in Aberdeen, with the creation of Great British Energy and the possibility of other Scotland-based Arm's Length Bodies also becoming part of the Energy Campus.

The establishment of a new Energy Campus in Aberdeen is part of the UK Government's Plan for Change, aimed at fostering collaboration. By relocating skilled roles to the same town or city, government campuses bring together civil servants with diverse skills and expertise through a shared policy or delivery focus. This approach aims to address issues and improve services for working people across the country.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has indicated that further details on the Energy Campus will be set out in due course following the completion of the current Spending Review process.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Civil Servants

John Cooper:

[\[57584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero currently has 34 individuals in the redeployment register.

■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Islamophobia

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[57654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 22 May 2025, to Question 52267, on DESNZ: Islamophobia, if he will publish the training material and handouts produced for the training and awareness session.

Michael Shanks:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not publish training materials as these resources are intended for internal use only. All training events are run in accordance with the Civil Service code.

■ Electricity

Claire Coutinho: [57731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the total cost of procuring frequency control services was in each month since January 2022.

Michael Shanks:

The data requested is a matter of public record and is published by the National Energy System Operator (NESO) [here](#) under the headings “MBSS” and “MBSS Archive”.

■ Fuels: Prices

Tom Gordon: [58683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what information his Department holds on when the Competition and Markets Authority plans to publish its assessment of regional road fuel pricing.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) addressed variation in regional road fuel pricing as part of their Road Fuel Market Study which was published in July 2023. The CMA published its latest report on 31 March 2025 and plans to release a more comprehensive report in the future, which will focus extensively on regional pricing differences.

Tom Gordon: [58684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to take steps to help reduce variations in fuel prices between regions.

Tom Gordon: [58685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps to help increase (a) competition and (b) the transparency of road fuel pricing.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government will implement Fuel Finder, a statutory open data scheme for fuel prices, to increase price transparency and help drivers make more informed decisions on where to buy petrol and diesel. This will increase pressure on retailers to compete strongly to attract consumers by lowering prices. Subject to legislation and Parliamentary time, we aim to launch Fuel Finder by the end of 2025.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) received statutory information gathering powers on 1 January 2025 through the Digital Markets, Competition & Consumer Act 2024 so it can monitor and scrutinise fuel prices. Once launched, Fuel Finder will provide the CMA with the appropriate data to adequately consider issues such as regional pricing variations.

■ General Practitioners: Carbon Emissions

Clive Jones: [57553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help GPs decarbonise their physical estates.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Government is supporting the decarbonisation of General Practitioners through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) and Boiler Upgrade Grant (BUS).

The PSDS supports the aim of reducing emissions from public sector buildings by 75% by 2037, compared to a 2017 baseline. The Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund provides grants for public sector bodies to put in place a heat decarbonisation plan, providing them with information they need to develop future applications to the PSDS.

If eligible, the BUS offers grants of £7500 towards the cost of purchasing and installing heat pumps, and £5000 towards a biomass boiler, for properties looking to replace their existing fossil fuel heating.

■ Geothermal Power

Satvir Kaur: [57546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help support the development of the geothermal energy industry (a) nationally and (b) in Southampton Test constituency.

Michael Shanks:

The Government is making support available to the industry through existing schemes such as Green Heat Network Fund, Contracts for Difference and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Potential projects in the Southampton Test constituency can apply if they meet the scheme eligibility criteria. The Government also continues to commission publicly available research to support the development of the industry. Research into the costs of geothermal energy is due to be published this summer and an open-access UK Geothermal Platform to support project feasibility work is in the final stages of development. Any future support is subject to spending review outcomes.

Perran Moon: [57847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to assess the UK's economically recoverable reserves of geothermal energy.

Michael Shanks:

The Government has supported research on geothermal in which some assessment of the UK potential is made. This includes funding a 2023 evidence-based assessment of the UK opportunity (<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/news/new-report-assesses-deep-geothermal-energy-in-the-uk/>); and commissioning additional research projects which will be published this summer. Together they will provide an update on

geothermal energy generation cost estimates and make accessible currently disparate technical sources of geothermal data and information. The Mining Remediation Authority has also released opportunity maps for mine water heat (<https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/0a4d95c1-5977-41a1-9c35-83017b871d22/mine-water-heat-opportunity-mapping-for-10-cities-in-england>).

■ Hydrogen: Business

Claire Coutinho:

[57391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to publish his Department's hydrogen to power business model.

Sarah Jones:

In December 2024, the Government committed to implementing a Hydrogen to Power Business Model (H2PBM) to de-risk Hydrogen to Power investment by mitigating deployment barriers.

Later this year, we will publish a H2PBM market engagement exercise outlining further design details for the H2PBM, including our minded to positions on eligibility and assessment criteria and proposed next steps for allocating support through the business model.

■ Insulation: Housing

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[58548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to inform the public about the level of risk of (a) moisture and (b) timber degradation following the application of sprayed foam insulant to typical domestic timber roofs.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Building Safety Regulator published research in March 2024 on the moisture risks from spray foam insulation, which showed that there are many situations where moisture risks are likely to be low, including when insulations are made in line with BS 5250:2021. This research did indicate there is a potential for risks to develop dependent on the specifics of roof assembly, temperature, and humidity conditions. The research can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/moisture-risk-of-spray-foam-insulation-applied-to-timber-sloped-roofs>.

All measures installed under government schemes must be installed by TrustMark registered installers and meet the industry standard for installation. If a product has been installed to the standard it should not require removal as a surveyor should be able to use the inspection protocol now available to make an assessment.

Where the measure has not been installed correctly, homeowners should contact their installer or use the TrustMark dispute resolution process to seek redress (<https://www.trustmark.org.uk/homeowner/information-guidance/if-things-go-wrong>).

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[58549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with mortgage providers on making advances on properties with timber roofs insulated with sprayed foam.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

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

■ Nuclear Power: Research

Michael Wheeler:

[\[56672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether (a) his Department, (b) UK Research and Innovation and (c) the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council is taking steps to support the (i) research and (ii) development of (A) advanced nuclear technologies and (B) sustainable closed fuel cycle systems.

Michael Shanks:

The DESNZ Advanced Nuclear Fund (ANF) is currently funding research and development of high temperature gas reactors (as part of the Advanced Modular Reactor Research, Development & Demonstration Programme), coated particle fuels (as part of the Coated Particle Fuels Programme). DESNZ is also supporting the development of small modular reactor technology through the Future Nuclear Enabling Fund and the Low-Cost Nuclear Challenge, which is delivered in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI is also funding R&D in development of advanced fuel cycles work, such as research on the properties of high temperature materials, graphite and advanced fuels.

■ Pylons: Lincolnshire

Sir John Hayes:

[\[57201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of compulsory purchase orders that will be required in (a) South Holland and the Deepings constituency and (b) Lincolnshire as part of the Grimsby to Walpole grid upgrade.

Michael Shanks:

The Planning Act 2008 includes provisions for the compulsory acquisition of land as part of Development Consent Orders (DCO). Decisions on whether to grant compulsory purchase orders (CPO) are made by the Secretary of State as part of the decision to grant a DCO. When doing so, the Secretary of State will assess whether the case for compulsory acquisition meets the requirements set out in the Planning Act 2008. Until the DCO application comes to the Secretary of State for a decision, no estimate can be made of the number of CPOs required as part of the Grimsby to Walpole grid upgrade scheme.

■ Renewable Energy

Mr Will Forster:

[\[57596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to (a) manage and (b) accelerate the connection of the renewable energy projects in the transmission queue.

Michael Shanks:

We are working closely with Ofgem and the network companies to develop and deliver fundamental reform of the grid connections process. National Energy System Operator (NESO's) proposals for connections reform were approved by Ofgem on 15 April.

These reforms will release up to 500GW of capacity from the oversubscribed connections queue, enabling accelerated connections for renewable energy projects that are ready and aligned with our strategic needs, as set out in the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan.

■ Solar Power and Wind Power: Land Use

Lee Anderson:

[\[57693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many hectares of arable farmland have been reallocated to (a) solar panels and (b) wind turbines since July 2024; and how many he plans to reallocate in the next four years.

Michael Shanks:

The Government does not hold the information requested.

■ Warm Homes Plan

Amanda Hack:

[\[57499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to ensure the Warm Homes Plan (a) reduces bills, (b) improves health outcomes and (c) reduces levels of fuel poverty.

Miatta Fahnbulleh:

The Warm Homes Plan will help cut household bills for families and slash fuel poverty. The Government has committed £13.2 billion to upgrade millions of homes across the country.

The Government is working to ensure that homes are fit for the future and the Department has been carrying out research to respond to the relevant climate change adaptation risks identified by the third Climate Change Risk Assessment, including to health and wellbeing. This work is informing the development of the Warm Homes Plan.

■ Wylfa Power Station**Llinos Medi:** [\[58735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what the total value of the financial support was that the Government was prepared to offer Hitachi to develop a new nuclear project at Wylfa in 2019.

Michael Shanks:

The Hitachi-owned Horizon took the decision to withdraw from the nuclear new build project at Wylfa in September 2020. Any and all discussions undertaken by the previous government with Hitachi concerning the financing of the proposed Horizon project at Wylfa are commercially sensitive and confidential.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal and Plant Health Agency: Weybridge****Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[58741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on when the full redevelopment of the Animal and Plant Health Agency headquarters in Weybridge will be completed.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is making good progress with the redevelopment of the APHA Weybridge site. Planning consent is in place, construction of interim science facilities is underway, work is proceeding on the design of the main National Biosecurity Centre and with the appointment of construction partners. The main construction works are expected to begin in 2027, be completed by 2032 with licensing and commission complete by 2034.

■ Animal Diseases: Disease Control**Dr Neil Hudson:** [\[58740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report by the National Audit Office entitled Resilience to Animal Diseases, published on 4 June 2025, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK's preparedness to respond to a major animal disease outbreak.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra and APHA actively assisted the National Audit Office in the collation of the data and information used to inform their report and will carefully work through the findings and recommendations to inform a plan for improvement. The National Audit Office will monitor progress against the recommendations at approximately 6 monthly intervals and we look forward to working with them on this. We are committed to improving biosecurity and resilience to animal diseases.

■ Batteries: Recycling

Perran Moon:

[\[57849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adopting EU Battery Regulation 2023/1542 as part of the Circular Economy Strategy.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. The Circular Economy Strategy will be supported by a series of roadmaps detailing the interventions that the government will make on a sector-by-sector basis, supporting government's Missions to kickstart economic growth and make Britain a clean energy superpower. We are considering the evidence for sector-specific interventions right across the economy, including for batteries, as we develop our Strategy, including considering international best practices and regulations in other jurisdictions, including the EU.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Civil Servants

John Cooper:

[\[57588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Daniel Zeichner:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their business units or, for example, have returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis but remains insignificant.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Business Premises

Victoria Collins:

[\[56491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that commercial properties have reached the minimum requirement of EPC Grade B by 2030.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government consulted on strengthening the non-domestic, which includes commercial properties, Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards to EPC C by 1 April 2027, and EPC B by 1 April 2030. We are currently reviewing the policy design, including the timelines for introduction, to ensure that it remains fair and proportionate for landlords and tenants. Until the response is published, and the Government position on any future standards confirmed, only the EPC E Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard applies.

■ Environmental Stewardship Scheme: Fylde

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[55352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to consult with (a) farmers and (b) agricultural stakeholders from Fylde constituency in advance of the implementation of the new Higher Level Stewardship payment rates.

Daniel Zeichner:

There are no live Higher Level Stewardship (HLS agreements in the Fylde constituency.

HLS payment rates have stayed the same for more than 10 years. In that time, they have fallen behind the rates offered through other schemes, including Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). On that basis we have taken the opportunity to reduce the difference by investing £30 million to increase payment rates so farmers in HLS agreements can continue to restore habitats, support rare species, preserve historic features and maintain traditional landscape features in our iconic countryside. We consulted with national stakeholders including the NFU, CLA and TFA in advance of making these changes.

■ Food Supply

Lee Anderson:

[\[57341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the Family Farm Tax and (b) increased solar panel construction on arable land on national food security.

Daniel Zeichner:

The Government recognises that food security is national security. We need a resilient and healthy food system that works with nature and supports British farmers and food producers.

The Government believes its reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief from 6 April 2026 get the balance right between supporting farms and businesses and fixing the public finances. The reforms announced by the Government are expected to result in up to around 520 estates claiming agricultural property relief paying more inheritance tax in 2026-27. Almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those that also claim for business property relief, will not pay any more tax as a result of the changes in 2026-27, based on the latest available data. Despite a tough fiscal context, the Government will maintain very significant levels of relief from inheritance tax beyond what is available to others, and compared to the position before 1992.

On solar panel construction, the Government recognises that there will be questions about the effects of land use change and impacts on the local environment. However, the Government does not believe that the rollout of solar generation poses a risk to food security. Planning guidance makes clear that developers should utilise

brownfield land wherever possible. Where agricultural land must be used, lower-quality land should be preferred. In any case, the total area of land used for solar is very small – less than 0.1% of UK land, as of September 2024.

■ Minerals: Recycling

Perran Moon:

[\[57851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to maximise critical mineral recovery from (a) Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment and (b) lithium-ion batteries.

Mary Creagh:

This Government is committed to transitioning to a circular economy. We have convened a Circular Economy Taskforce, comprising experts from industry, academia, and civil society, to help develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England. To support this transition, the Circular Economy Taskforce will start with six priority sectors including electronics and transport, which includes electric vehicle batteries. Interventions, including on critical minerals, will be considered as part of the roadmaps for these sectors. We are also considering regulatory levers to increase battery collection rates and encourage best practise in end-of-life management.

The UK's Critical Minerals Strategy will set the long-term ambition of secure supply of critical minerals UK and harnessing our competitive advantage in midstream processing and recycling. It will also outline how the ambition will be achieved through optimising domestic production and through strategic international collaboration.

■ National Park Cities

Satvir Kaur:

[\[57545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to help support the National Park City initiative.

Mary Creagh:

The Department recognises the value of the National Park City initiative, which aligns with our priorities to increase access to nature and green spaces for everyone. We continue to engage with the National Park City Foundation to support the initiative's ambition to make urban areas greener, healthier, and more connected to nature.

■ Recycling: Artificial Intelligence

Gregory Stafford:

[\[58521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using AI technologies in the national recycling system for (a) waste separation and (b) material recovery.

Mary Creagh:

The Government has not conducted a specific assessment of use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to support recycling in England.

However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) conducts ongoing engagement with local authorities and businesses that collect and dispose of waste, including as part of the Simpler Recycling Collections reforms. Through this engagement, Defra is aware of the use of AI technologies to support improved separation and recovery of recyclate from material recovery facilities (MRFs). At some MRFs such as Sweeep Kuusakoski in Kent which I visited recently, AI technology is helping to sort materials that could not previously be easily sorted for reprocessing, including plastic films.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Defra are funding research to help overcome the challenges faced when seeking to build a circular economy. An example of this is the work that the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC) and Defra are funding to accelerate UK recycling capabilities.

Moreover, Defra has recently published its AI Strategy and has appointed a new AI Enablement team within its Digital, Data, Technology and Security directorate. Our approach is to seek out opportunities to apply AI technologies but to do so by taking a reasonably cautious approach as to ensure that this is done responsibly and ethically as we continue to develop our expertise and harness the expertise and learning from others.

■ River Thames: Boats**Freddie van Mierlo:****[58883]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure the (a) safe and (b) smooth passage of vessels along the Thames during (i) Henley Royal Regatta week and (ii) other events which attract international visitors to the town.

Emma Hardy:

As the navigation authority for the non-tidal River Thames, the Environment Agency (EA) plays a key role in supporting the safe and successful delivery of over 200 river-based events each year. These events contribute significantly to the cultural heritage and public enjoyment of the River Thames, while the EA remains committed to upholding the public right of navigation and ensuring the river remains open to traffic.

The EA has a long-standing and constructive relationship with the event organisers of Henley Royal Regatta. Working together, they've developed and implemented local navigation measures that provide a dedicated racing lane for competition and a separate channel for passing vessels. This approach ensures that competitors, commercial operators, and leisure users can all share the river safely and effectively throughout the event.

The EA also maintains a visible presence on-the-water during the Regatta, working closely with professional partners including Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire

Fire and Rescue Service. This coordinated effort helps to ensure compliance with navigation rules and supports the safety of all river users. Drawing on all its operational experience, the EA is confident that this year's Henley Royal Regatta, along with all other events along the Thames, will proceed smoothly and safely.

■ Sustainable Farming Incentive

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[57451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 June 2025 to Question 54446 on Environmental Land Management Schemes: Lancashire, which (a) stakeholder groups and (b) representative farming organisations his Department has consulted on the development of the future Sustainable Farming Incentive offer.

Daniel Zeichner:

Defra is working closely with farmers and industry stakeholders, including the National Farmers Union, the Country Land and Business Association, the Tenant Farmers Association, the Nature Friendly Farming Network, the Agricultural Industries Confederation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, National Trust and the Green Alliance and a further group of 30 industry stakeholders, to design a future Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer that fairly and responsibly directs funding. Further details about the reformed SFI offer will be announced later in the summer.

■ Water Charges: Social Tariffs

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[57663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the source of revenue to fund social tariffs under Section 13 of the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 is; and whether costs will be imposed (a) directly and (b) indirectly on the water bills of residential customers who do not have social tariffs.

Emma Hardy:

This Government is working with industry to ensure that eligible customers across the country get the support to which they are entitled.

■ Water Companies: Regulation

Ben Goldsborough:

[\[57838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to regulate water companies operating in protected landscapes to help prevent environmental harm.

Emma Hardy:

This Government will continue to work with regulators to hold water companies to account on poor performance and drive improvements which benefit customers and the environment. The Water (Special Measures) Act delivers on our manifesto

commitment to put water companies under special measures by strengthening regulation to clean up our waters.

Through water resource management plans and regional water resources plans we are addressing unsustainable abstraction and protecting the environment from climate change over the next 25 years and beyond. These plans include action to protect England's precious and unique chalk stream habitats, reducing abstraction by nearly 3 billion litres a day by 2050.

Nutrient pollution from wastewater is one of the key pressures affecting our rivers, lakes, and seas. There is a legally binding target under the Environment Act 2021 to reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 80% by 2038 against a 2020 baseline. We will require water companies to upgrade 440 wastewater treatment works by 2030, to meet stricter phosphorus permit limits, reducing harmful nutrient pollution from treated wastewater. In Price Review 2024 final determinations, Ofwat has allowed £4.795bn of investment to improve water quality by reducing phosphorus pollution in England and Wales.

Furthermore, as part of the record £11bn of investment to improve nearly 3,000 storm overflows in England and Wales during Price Review 2024, with 75% of such High Priority Sites needing to be improved by 2035 and the rest by 2045. By 2050, we expect no storm overflow spill to cause any adverse ecological harm and spill no more than 10 times per year.

■ Water: Consumption

Kevin Hollinrake:

[57662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average water usage per household is in volume terms by number of (a) bedrooms and (b) occupants.

Emma Hardy:

This information is publicly available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-resources-2023-2024-analysis-of-the-water-industrys-annual-water-resources-performance/water-resources-2023-2024-analysis-of-the-water-industrys-annual-water-resources-performance>

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty

Mr Mark Francois:

[54680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the document entitled UK/Mauritius: Agreement concerning the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia (CS Mauritius No.1/2025), what steps he has taken to protect the UK from legal claims having recognised the wrongs of the past in the preamble to that Agreement.

Stephen Doughty:

This government and previous governments have repeatedly stated we deeply regret the way Chagossians were removed from the Islands. The UK provided compensation in the 1980s that courts have ruled was paid in full and final settlement. The Agreement will increase support to Chagossian communities. The Agreement also provides that it constitutes full and final settlement of all claims by Mauritius in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

There are no provisions within the treaty for Mauritian officials to be based on Diego Garcia, however Mauritians can work on Diego Garcia, subject to appropriate security protocols.

■ British Overseas Territories: Sovereignty**Katie Lam:**[\[57134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's policy is on the impact of international court rulings on the UK's sovereignty over (a) Gibraltar, (b) the Falkland Islands, (c) RAF Akrotiri and Dhekelia and (d) other overseas territories.

Stephen Doughty:

There have not been any rulings from international courts on the UK's sovereignty over Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia or any other Overseas Territories. The circumstances around the Diego Garcia Military Base Agreement are unique with absolutely no bearing on the wider Overseas Territories. It is a very different issue with a very different history. We remain committed to our Overseas Territories family. Sovereignty of other Overseas Territories is not up for negotiation.

■ Canada: Overseas Trade**Adam Jogee:**[\[55781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Canadian counterpart on trade.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with his new Canadian counterpart, Anita Anand, on 30 May, and met with her in person on 6 June. On both occasions, they discussed a wide range of issues across our economic and security relationship. The Foreign Secretary looks forward to working with her closely in the future to deepen the vitally important UK-Canada relationship, including through strengthening our significant economic partnership.

■ Commonwealth: Diplomatic Service**Adam Jogee:** [\[55748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether a British High Commissioner has been appointed in all Commonwealth member states.

Stephen Doughty:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) regularly reviews its overseas network to ensure it reflects UK foreign priorities and provides effective representation across the Commonwealth. All Commonwealth member states, except the UK, have a UK High Commissioner representation. This may be resident or non-resident High Commissioners. The UK has the UK Commonwealth Envoy based in the FCDO in London.

■ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**Patricia Ferguson:** [\[57020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if a Minister from his Department will represent the UK at the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 10 to 12 June 2025.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK will be represented at this year's Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Minister Seema Malhotra in her role as Minister for Equalities. Minister Malhotra will be joined by senior officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the Cabinet Office, and the Work and Health Unit, a cross-government unit, jointly sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care.

■ Deirdre Murphy**Claire Hanna:** [\[58279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on Deirdre Murphy from Swansea following her arrest on 31 May 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

Our embassy in Tel Aviv is aware of the situation. We understand that Ms Murphy is being supported by the Irish Embassy. She has not been in touch with the British Embassy, but our consular team remain on hand to provide any support to Ms Murphy if required.

■ Developing Countries: Water

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[56304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in (a) schools and (b) healthcare facilities in low and middle-income countries.

Stephen Doughty:

We remain committed to work in partnership with governments to strengthen the systems to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools and health care facilities in low and lower-middle income countries. Our WASH Systems for Health Programme works with five district health teams in Sierra Leone to maintain WASH services in health care facilities, to prevent infection and protect health workers. Globally, we work with partners including the World Bank, UNICEF and WHO to provide data on WASH services in schools and health care facilities to support governments prioritising, planning and mobilising finance to close the service gaps.

■ Development Aid

Matt Vickers:

[\[55373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which development programmes will continue to be funded following the planned reduction of the official development assistance budget.

Stephen Doughty:

Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations and the impact on programmes are being worked through. We are taking a rigorous approach to ensure all ODA delivers value for money.

We will publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Annual Report & Accounts this summer.

Wendy Morton:

[\[56800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) metrics and (b) assessments he uses to determine whether official development assistance programmes constitute value for money.

Stephen Doughty:

Value for money is embedded into all our Official Development Assistance (ODA) programming. We use a mix of quantitative data and qualitative information to assess value for money and inform decision-making throughout the programme lifecycle. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office uses experts, technical advisors, programme managers, and procurement professionals with experience of working in low-income environments and knowledge of global research of what works.

The Foreign Secretary led a cross-Departmental ODA review as part of the Spending Review. This ensures that all UK ODA spend, across a range of government departments, is strategically coherent and provides the best value for money for the British taxpayer.

■ Development Aid: Education**Rachael Maskell:** [\[57640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reductions in Overseas Development Assistance on the number of children able to access education.

Stephen Doughty:

Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used are being worked through following the recent Spending Review and through resource allocation processes. We intend to publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Annual Report and Accounts this summer. The FCDO is focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way.

■ Development Aid: Sexual and Reproductive Health**Patricia Ferguson:** [\[57021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he will continue to provide funding to (a) the Women's Integrated Sexual Health program, (b) other Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights programs and (c) access to those programs for (i) people with disabilities and (ii) other marginalised groups.

Stephen Doughty:

Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used are being worked through following the recent Spending Review and through resource allocation processes. We intend to publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Annual Report and Accounts this summer. The FCDO is focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way including by considering the impact for people with disabilities and other marginalised groups in line with the public sector equality duty.

■ Development Aid: Tropical Diseases**Patricia Ferguson:** [\[57023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to continue to fund the (a) treatment and (b) elimination of neglected tropical diseases.

Stephen Doughty:

Detailed decisions on how the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget will be used are being worked through following the recent Spending Review and through resource allocation processes. We intend to publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Annual Report and Accounts this summer. The FCDO is focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way.

■ Development Aid: Water

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[\[56303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to increase the level of funding available for water, sanitation and hygiene programmes.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is committed to action on Global Health, including water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as part of our development partnerships. Current UK bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend on WASH totalled £37 million in 2023, and we continue to support WASH through our multilateral spend, estimated to have been approximately £79 million in 2022.

■ Development Aid: Women

Wendy Morton:

[\[56801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2025 to Question 51381 on Development Aid: Women, whether his discussions with stakeholders included representatives from (a) women's rights and (b) women-led organisations.

Stephen Doughty:

We are engaging with partners and stakeholders as we transition the Official Development Assistance budget to 0.3 per cent of Gross National Income. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) ministers and officials continue to meet stakeholders on a wide range of issues, including representatives from women's rights, and women-led organisations, both in the course of their duties and as part of a commitment to harnessing a wide range of perspectives to inform the FCDO's policy and strategy.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reductions to international development aid on (a) women and (b) children.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains committed to empowering women and girls around the world through our international work. We recognise that supporting women and girls is essential for development and we will continue to do so by using our voice to be a champion for women and girls across the world; working with women's organisations, particularly local organisations; and mainstreaming gender equality to put women and girls at the heart of everything we do.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is focused on ensuring that every pound is spent in the most impactful way. Equality Impact Assessments - which consider impacts on women and girls - are an essential part of how we make decisions on Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations. We

intend to publish final 2025/26 ODA programme allocations in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts this summer.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[58578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2025 to Question 54630 on Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, if he will make an estimate of the quantity of aid supplied into Gaza between 19 January 2025 and 18 March 2025.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

After months of limited or no humanitarian aid being delivered, essential supplies are either no longer available or quickly running out. As mentioned in my previous response, due to the complex operating environment and limited real-time data, it is difficult to quantify the volume of aid that has been supplied and aid currently awaiting entry. Israel must urgently allow the UN and other humanitarian partners to do their jobs and deliver aid to those who so desperately need it.

Mary Glendon:

[\[58638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2025 to Question 56774 on Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, what diplomatic steps he is taking to call for an (a) immediate and (b) independent investigation into the reports of the killing of Palestinians near aid sites in Gaza.

Mr Hamish Falconer:

We are appalled by repeated reports of mass casualty incidents, in which Palestinians have been killed when trying to access aid sites in Gaza. Desperate civilians who have endured 20 months of war should never face the risk of death or injury to simply feed themselves and their families. We have raised our concerns directly with the Government of Israel. At a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 4 June, we called for an immediate and independent investigation into these events, and for the perpetrators to be held to account.

■ Georgia: Politics and Government

Stephen Gethins:

[\[58223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential (a) implications for its policies of the Georgian Foreign Agent Registration Act and (b) impact of that legislation on civil society in that country.

Stephen Doughty:

I am deeply concerned by the Georgian Foreign Agents Registration Act which came into force on 31 May 2025 and the implications it will have on our ability to support the reforms required for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. This legislation represents a serious setback for democratic governance, civil liberties, and Georgia's stated European aspirations. I have shared my concerns with Georgian Dream

representatives and encouraged engagement with civil society, opposition voices and the Venice Commission to bring their approach into line with international human rights standards as well as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe principles and commitments.

■ Nuclear Disarmament

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to achieve multilateral disarmament of nuclear weapons.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK remains committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and to our Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament negotiations in good faith. Nuclear disarmament is a process as well as an end-state, which is best achieved through a negotiated approach within existing international frameworks and reflecting the security environment. Whilst the current security environment poses significant challenges to this goal, the UK continues to work with partners to make progress on mechanisms that will ensure disarmament can be verified, transparent and irreversible if and when the security environment allows. We also continue to take steps to address future challenges on the verification of disarmament. An effective verification regime is essential for states to be confident others have eliminated their nuclear weapons and, are meeting treaty obligations. The UK has been at the forefront of national and international verification research, both domestically and within a range of global initiatives - for example, through the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership.

■ Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the UK Government complies with its Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons obligations.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is compliant with and remains committed to its obligations across all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In line with its commitment under Article VI, the UK continues to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, and to the long-term goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Whilst the current security environment poses significant challenges to this goal, the UK continues to work with partners to make progress on mechanisms that will ensure disarmament can be verified, transparent and irreversible when the security environment allows. The UK is also proud to play its part in strengthening non-proliferation through active participation in export controls, and championing the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards as key enablers of nuclear trade. The UK has also provided financial support to both the Sustained Dialogue on Peaceful Uses and the International

Atomic Energy Agency's Technical Cooperation Programme to improve developing states' access to the benefits of peaceful nuclear technologies. The UK will publish a National Report on its NPT progress at the NPT 2026 Review Conference which will provide further details on this work.

■ Sustainable Development

Liz Jarvis:

[56399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK is on track to meet United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Stephen Doughty:

The UK is committed to working with partners at home and abroad to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The United Nations (UN) does not measure individual countries' progress towards the SDGs, but the collective global progress. However, there are complimentary reports produced using UN data that assess countries' progress towards achieving the SDGs, such as the Sustainable Development Report, which assessed the UK as ninth out of 166 countries in 2024, with a progress score of 82%. The UK's Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019 provided a detailed account of actions being taken to achieve the SDGs across the UK government and other actors. This government has not yet taken a decision on undertaking a second VNR.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Dental Services: Contracts

Perran Moon:

[57856]

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

Stephen Kinnock:

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 National Health Service dentists. There are no perfect payment systems and careful consideration needs to be given to any potential changes to the complex dental system, so that we deliver a system better for patients and the profession.

We are continuing to meet the British Dental Association and other representatives of the dental sector to discuss how we can best deliver our shared ambition to improve access for NHS dental patients.

■ Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and NHS Pay Review Body: Pay Settlements

Andy McDonald:

[\[56794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of the pay awards made through the (a) Dentists and Doctors Pay Review Body and (b) NHS Pay Review Body processes on the real terms value of wages in each year since 2010.

Karin Smyth:

The table attached shows the estimated average increases to basic pay, where these were based on pay review body recommendations for members of the Hospital and Community Health Sector workforce in England, as well as the average consumer price index inflation for each year since 2010/11.

In 2011/12 and 2012/13, the pay review bodies were stood down. Between 2013/14 and 2017/18, the pay review bodies reported, but headline recommendations were determined by public sector pay policy.

As independent contractors, it is for general practice partners to determine uplifts in pay for themselves and their employees. As dental practices are similarly private businesses, it falls to them to set employee pay and conditions.

Each year, the Government sets out the funds available to the Department, and in reaching their conclusions, pay review bodies take careful account of economic and other evidence submitted by employers, the Government, unions, and others.

Attachments:

1. PQ56794 Document [PQ56794 TABLE FORMATTED FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE .docx.docx]

Andy McDonald:

[\[56795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the real terms value of wages set by Government pay awards in the (a) Dentists and Doctors Pay Review Body and (b) NHS Pay Review Body for 2025-26 on trends in the levels of (i) recruitment and (ii) retention of public sector workforce staff.

Karin Smyth:

This specific assessment has not been made. Pay is an important factor in the National Health Service being able to continue to attract and reward talented staff. Pay review bodies are required to take careful account of the economic and financial evidence submitted by the Government, trades unions, representatives of NHS employers, and others to reach their recommendations on pay.

When considering evidence in order to make pay recommendations, the Dentists and Doctors Pay Review Body and the NHS Pay Review Body pay due regard to many factors, including the potential impact of pay on staff recruitment and retention, as a core component of the terms of reference for pay review bodies.

■ Health Services: Trade Unions

Andy McDonald: [\[56797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of trends in levels of confidence of workforce unions in public health sector pay review body processes.

Karin Smyth:

This specific assessment has not been made. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has met regularly with unions to help rebuild the relationship between the Government and National Health Service staff.

Whilst we will continue to use the Pay Review Bodies to set pay, we have listened to union concerns about the process, which is why we have committed to remitting in July this year, with an ambition to announce and implement uplifts as early as possible in 2026/27.

Andy McDonald: [\[56798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential implications for his Department's policies of the request of workforce unions for the establishment of direct pay negotiations in the health sector.

Karin Smyth:

The Pay Review Body (PRB) process is the established mechanism for determining pay uplifts in the public sector. PRBs carefully consider evidence submitted to them from a range of stakeholders, including the Government and trade unions.

The Government is committed to a credible, independent PRB process as the way to set pay for National Health Service staff in England, and there are no plans to replace the process with direct negotiations.

However, we have listened to union concerns about the process, which is why we committed to improving the timeline this year and will look to build on that by remitting the PRBs to begin the next pay round in July, putting us on track to announce pay awards as early as possible in 2026/27.

■ Integrated Care Boards

Alex Mayer: [\[57004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of integrated care board reconfigurations on patient access to healthcare services.

Karin Smyth:

NHS England has asked integrated care boards (ICBs) to act primarily as strategic commissioners of health and care services and to reduce the duplication of responsibilities within their structure, with the expectation of achieving a reduction in their running cost allowance. NHS England provided additional guidance to ICBs,

National Health Service trusts, and NHS foundation trusts in a letter on 1 April 2025. This letter is available at the following:

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

These changes will form part of a package of measures, including the forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan, that positively impact on patient care and safety by driving quality of care, productivity, and innovation in the NHS. ICBs will continue to deliver their statutory responsibilities and NHS England's transformation team will continue to work with ICBs to develop their plans and to ensure implementation of the changes, whilst maintaining a focus on patient safety.

■ NHS: Pay

Andy McDonald: [56796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of agreeing a long-term strategy with the (a) Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration and (b) NHS Pay Review Body to help improve pay in the NHS.

Andy McDonald: [56799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits for recruitment and retention of agreeing a long-term strategy to improve pay in real terms for the workforces covered by (a) the Dentists and Doctors Pay Review Body and (b) the NHS Pay Review Body.

Karin Smyth:

There are no current plans to make these specific assessments. The Government is committed to a credible, independent Pay Review Body (PRB) process as the right mechanism to recommend annual pay increases for most public sector staff. In her statement on the public finances on 29 July 2024, my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed that the Government wished to continue to use the PRB process.

The role of the NHS Pay Review Body and the Dentists and Doctors Pay Review Body is to make recommendations to the Prime Minister and ministers on the annual pay award for National Health Service staff and other related matters within their remit. They act independently of the Government.

The PRBs lay out in their reports the reasoning for their recommended awards based on their terms of reference. In reaching their recommendations, the review bodies have regard to recruitment and retention and are required to take careful account of the economic and other evidence submitted by the Government, trades unions, representatives of NHS employers, and others.

The Government is not bound by PRB recommendations, and it's for my Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to decide how to respond to the recommendations of PRBs for the NHS in England.

■ Reserve Forces: Health Services**Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst:** [\[57164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of NHS staffing shortages on the availability of medical Reservists for the armed forces.

Karin Smyth:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS Employers, which is part of the NHS Confederation and supports workforce development across the National Health Service, runs a programme that is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Defence to encourage NHS organisations to be supportive and flexible employers when it comes to people joining the Armed Forces Reserve. This ensures that people with the critically important skills that the reserves are looking for, such as doctors, are able to train and deploy when needed.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[57165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps with the Secretary of State for Defence to create a formal framework for supporting NHS-employed clinicians who serve as medical Reservists.

Karin Smyth:

Clinicians who serve as Reservists play a vital role in supporting both the National Health Service and the Armed Forces. The Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Defence work with NHS Employers to ensure that NHS organisations are supportive and flexible when it comes to people joining the Armed Forces Reserve, and to enable individuals to train and deploy when needed. All NHS trusts are signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and all have been awarded an Employer Recognition Scheme award to reflect their commitment to supporting our Armed Forces, including the Reserves.

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst: [\[57166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has considered a Sponsored Reserve model or similar arrangement to enable NHS clinicians to contribute directly to Defence Medical Services while maintaining NHS employment.

Karin Smyth:

There have been no formal considerations for the implementation of a Sponsored Reserve model within the National Health Service. The Department of Health and Social Care, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, is focused on growing and maintaining the Active Armed Forces reserve and works with NHS organisations to enable individuals to train and deploy when needed.

■ Restless Legs Syndrome: Medical Treatments

Henry Tufnell:

[58104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 5 June 2025 to Question 56598 on Restless Legs Syndrome: Medical Treatments, whether he plans to make such an assessment.

Karin Smyth:

The Department has no plans to make such an assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has an established prioritisation process overseen by a prioritisation board, for the identification of priorities for guidance development. Anyone is able to suggest a topic through the NICE website, at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/forms/topic-suggestion>

The licensed dopamine agonist medicines that are indicated for the treatment of restless leg syndrome are ropinirole, pramipexole, and rotigotine. Decisions about what medicines to prescribe are made by healthcare professionals and National Health Service commissioners, based on an assessment of the available evidence, taking into account national guidance and advice, such as Clinical Knowledge Summaries.

■ Tomography: Waiting Lists

Helen Morgan:

[58291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for diagnostic scans in North Shropshire constituency.

Karin Smyth:

In March 2025, the diagnostic waiting list at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust was 14,808, 3,229 of which, or 21.8%, were waiting over six weeks. This compares to a waiting list of 12,771 in March 2024, where 3,165 people, or 24.8%, were waiting over six weeks.

To date, the Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken a number of steps to reduce waiting times for diagnostic tests. The Shrewsbury Telford and Wrekin Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) in Telford is providing additional capacity to see patients away from hospital sites, reducing unnecessary hospital visits. This fully operational, standard CDC is providing cardiorespiratory services, which include echocardiograms, spirometry, and electrocardiograms, as well as radiology, which includes computed tomography, x-ray, ultrasound, and magnetic resonance imaging scans, phlebotomy, and teledermatology services. The CDC is providing capacity for approximately 13,000 diagnostic tests each month.

In addition to the CDC, there are currently two mobile magnetic resonance imaging scanners on site at the Princess Royal Hospital, and an additional room for scanning non-obstetric ultrasound patient referrals has been opened. Through the introduction of this additional capacity, imaging waiting lists have reduced by 41% from the end of

January 2025 across the Shropshire Telford and Wrekin ICB. In January, 58% of imaging patients had a scan within six weeks of referral and, in May, 87% of patients had a scan within six weeks of referral.

The Shropshire Telford and Wrekin ICB recognises that there is further to go in reducing diagnostic waiting times, and the system is now looking to extend opening hours at the Shrewsbury Telford and Wrekin CDC, in order to provide additional diagnostic capacity across all radiology services, alongside current magnetic resonance imaging services that are already open 12 hours a day, seven days a week. This will be supported by continuing work with the independent sector, through the outsourcing of reporting, to ensure scan results are available in a timely manner. Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin are committed to sustaining the improvements they are making to ensure patients are having the tests and scans they need at the right time.

NHS England is also engaging with the Shropshire Telford and Wrekin ICB as part of the process to identify the most appropriate locations for new CDCs, and therefore there is the possibility of a second CDC for the population of Shropshire. This process considers that any new CDC will be positioned in a location that addresses local need and health inequalities. Details of future CDCs will be communicated in due course.

HOME OFFICE

■ Anti-social Behaviour

Lee Anderson:

[\[57344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to give the police increased powers to tackle antisocial behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

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

Through the Crime and Policing Bill, we are strengthening the powers available to the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies to tackle ASB, including introducing new Respect Orders to tackle the most persistent ASB offenders.

Unlike the existing Civil Injunction, which the Respect Order partially replaces, breach will be a criminal offence, enforceable by arrest and tried in the criminal court. Penalty for breach will include community sentences, unlimited fines, and prison time for the most serious breaches.

We are also introducing, through the Crime and Policing Bill, the following measures:

- Removing the requirement for a police officer to issue a warning before seizing a motor-vehicle being used to cause ASB.

- Extending the maximum exclusion period for dispersal directions from 48 hours to 72 hours, with a mandatory review at 48 hours.
- Increasing the upper limit for a fixed penalty notice for breaches of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) or a Community Protection Notice (CPN) from £100 to £500.
- Extending the timeframe that relevant agencies can apply to a magistrates' court for a closure order from 48 hours after service of a closure notice to 72 hours.
- Extending the power to issue closure notices to registered social housing providers.
- Extending the powers available under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) to allow CSAS officers to issue fixed penalty notices for breach of CPNs and PSPOs.
- Creating a duty for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to promote awareness of the ASB Case Review in their police force area and provide a route for victims to query decisions via their office.

Introducing new ASB data reporting requirements by creating a power for the Home Secretary to make regulations requiring local bodies, such as councils and social housing providers, to report specified ASB data to the Home Office.

■ Asylum: Housing

Lisa Smart:

[\[57756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to extend the move on period for newly recognised refugees to 56 days beyond June 2025.

Seema Malhotra:

In December, the Home Office operationalised a pilot to extend the grace period to 56 days to support local authorities during a period of increased asylum decision making and with the transition to eVisas. It is important that we take the necessary time to evaluate the impact of the interim measures, including overall net costs to taxpayers, before making a decision on whether to make the measures permanent.

■ Cannabis

Lee Anderson:

[\[57695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of legalising recreational cannabis on (a) physical health, (b) mental health, (c) the NHS and (d) antisocial behaviour.

Dame Diana Johnson:

No.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime

Lee Anderson:

[\[57349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help tackle (a) low level and (b) county lines drug dealing.

Dame Diana Johnson:

To deliver our pledge to halve knife crime in the next decade, it is crucial that we tackle all drug supply, including gangs that run county lines through violence and exploitation.

County Lines is the most violent model of drug supply and a harmful form of child criminal exploitation. That is why we are investing £42m this financial year (25/26) in the County Lines Programme, to target exploitative drug dealing gangs whilst breaking the organised crime groups behind this trade.

From July 2024 to March 2025, law enforcement activity through the County Lines Programme taskforces has resulted in more than 1,200 deal lines closed, 2,000 arrests (including the arrest and subsequent charge of over 800 deal line holders) and 2,100 safeguarding referrals of children and vulnerable people. Over 320 children and young people also received dedicated specialist support through the County Lines Programme support service in that time.

As committed to in the Government's manifesto, we have introduced a new offence of child criminal exploitation in the Crime and Policing Bill to go after the gangs who are luring children into violence and crime. We are also introducing a new criminal offence of 'coerced internal concealment' as an amendment to the Bill, which will crack down on the dangerous practice of anyone, including gang leaders, who force people to hide items inside their bodies to avoid detection often as part of horrendous and exploitative drugs trade.

■ Electric Bicycles: Seized Articles

Mr Andrew Snowden:

[\[57773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegally modified e-bikes have been seized by police in the past 12 months.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The Home Office does not centrally collect this data.

■ Emergency Services: Medals

Mr James Frith:

[\[57317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will introduce a medal in recognition of severely injured emergency service personnel.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Any official award is a gift from the Government, on behalf of His Majesty The King to recognise individuals within the service. 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 his final decision.

The Home Office will continue to consider proposals for new awards for members of the emergency services. It is only right that we recognise the sacrifices made by the emergency services, and it is important to make sure this is done in a proportionate and effective manner.

■ Heathrow Airport: Money

Jack Rankin: [\[58842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May 2025 to Question 50803 on Heathrow Airport: Money, how much cash was seized by the Border Force (a) at Heathrow Airport and (b) nationally in the last year for which figures are available.

Jack Rankin: [\[58843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are employed by Border Force at Heathrow Airport.

Seema Malhotra:

In the interests of maintaining border security, Border Force does not routinely disclose information of a port-specific nature, and the requested national information is not available from published statistics.

■ Home Office: Civil Servants

John Cooper: [\[57559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many permanent civil servants in her Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis. At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their business units or, for example, have been on loan to another department during which time their role has been phased out.

■ Immigration

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[57357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of people who will be impacted by the changes to the five-year settlement.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government's Immigration White Paper, published on 12 May 2025, announced new measures on a wide range of issues, including indefinite leave to remain.

This will include an expansion of the Point-Based System which will increase the standard qualifying period for settlement to ten years. As part of this expansion, we will reform the current rules around settlement so that individuals must earn their right to a privileged immigration status in the UK through the long-term contribution they bring to our country.

We will be consulting on the earned settlement scheme later this year and will provide details of how the scheme will work after that, including on any transitional arrangements for people already in the UK.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[57358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits expanding existing safe and legal routes.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[57361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of consulting on introducing a pilot humanitarian refugee visa for people fleeing (a) war and (b) persecution.

Seema Malhotra:

The Immigration White paper, published on 12 May 2025, announced new measures on a wide range of issues including refugee sponsorship and resettlement, further details of which will be set out in due course.

■ Immigration Controls**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[57362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the White Paper entitled Restoring control over the immigration system, published on 12 May 2025, whether refugees seeking to bring family to the UK will be subject to increased (a) financial and (b) English language requirements.

Seema Malhotra:

The Immigration White paper, published 12 May 2025, set out a wide range of reforms, including to family policy, further details of which will be set out in due course.

■ Immigration Controls: Students**Matt Vickers:** [\[57411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's white paper Restoring Control over the Immigration System, published in May 2025, when her Department will publish the Red-Amber-Green basic compliance assessment ratings for student sponsor institutions.

Matt Vickers:

[\[57412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) internal checks and (b) admission procedures of sponsor institutions currently subject to action plans in relation to international students from countries with higher rates of subsequent asylum claims.

Matt Vickers:

[\[57413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of action plans in preventing compliance breaches by licensed sponsors of student visas.

Matt Vickers:

[\[57414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will restrict the number of new international students sponsoring institutions currently subject to action plans can recruit.

Seema Malhotra:

The Immigration White Paper, published 12 May, set out a wide range of reforms, including to student visas, further details of which will be set out in due course.

■ Immigration: Business

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[57463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Restoring control over the immigration system white paper, published on 13 May 2025, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of doubling the number of workers that an overseas business can send to the UK with the aim of establishing a presence in the UK on levels of immigration.

Seema Malhotra:

The Immigration White paper, published 12 May, set out proposed reforms in a number of areas.

Over recent years, proper control and management of the immigration system has been lost. Levels of net migration have risen to a record high of 906,000 in the year ending June 2023 - a four-fold increase in the space of under four years.

Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Immigration: Public Consultation

Lisa Smart:

[\[57436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to set out a timeline for the consultation to inform the delivery of the White Paper entitled Restoring Control over the Immigration System, published on 12 May 2025.

Lisa Smart: [\[57437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to consult charities on the implementation of the policies in the White Paper entitled Restoring Control over the Immigration System, published on 12 May 2025.

Seema Malhotra:

The Immigration White Paper, published 12 May, set out a wide range of reforms, including to student visas, further details of which will be set out in due course.

Lisa Smart: [\[57438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to consult people with prior experience of applying for refugee family reunion in the forthcoming consultation on the implementation of the White Paper entitled Restoring Control over the Immigration System, published on 12 May 2025.

Lisa Smart: [\[57439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the forthcoming consultation on the implementation of the White Paper entitled Restoring Control over the Immigration System, published on 12 May 2025, will include consultation on the potential impact of changes to English language proficiency requirements on people applying for refugee family reunion.

Seema Malhotra:

The Home Office regularly engages with a wide range of experts and stakeholders when developing policy or consulting on proposals.

■ Immigration: Republic of Ireland

Jim Allister: [\[58511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that EU citizens do not move from the Republic of Ireland to become resident in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the rest of the UK.

Seema Malhotra:

Journeys from Ireland to the UK are within the Common Travel Area (CTA). As part of the CTA arrangements, the UK does not operate routine immigration controls of individuals arriving in the UK by air or sea from within the CTA, and no immigration checks are undertaken at the land border with Ireland.

The UK does however operate intelligence-led operational activity on CTA routes – away from the land border. This is to detect those who intend to abuse CTA arrangements. Operational activity must be targeted and supported by specific intelligence of CTA abuse.

There is a high level of cooperation on migration and border security between all members of the CTA (UK, Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies) to identify and tackle migration trends as they emerge.

Everyone entering the UK, regardless of where they enter from, is required to meet UK's immigration requirements. Anyone identified attempting to circumvent UK border controls is liable to be detained and, if they are not lawfully present within the UK, removed.

■ Junior Doctors: Migrant Workers

Aphra Brandreth: [57891]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has considered taking entry-level doctor jobs off the shortage occupation skills list.

Seema Malhotra:

The Government published the White Paper 'Restoring Control over the immigration System' on 12 May 2025. The White Paper set out its intention to introduce a Temporary Shortage List to replace the Immigration Salary List (previously known as the Shortage Occupation List).

The list will initially be comprised of occupations where the MAC have previously identified as in shortage and those which are key to the Industrial Strategy. The Government will set out in due course the composition of that list.

■ Migrants: Finance

Helen Whately: [57676]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have asked for their no recourse to public funds to be lifted in each year since 2020.

Seema Malhotra:

Quarterly data regarding NRPF - Destitution Change of Conditions Applications and Outcomes is published in tabs CoC_01 – CoC_07 of the Immigration and protection data: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-and-protection-data-q4-2024>

Helen Whately: [57677]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have had their indefinite leave to remain claim rejected because they have applied to lift no recourse to public funds.

Seema Malhotra:

A person applying for settlement in the UK must meet several requirements. Not meeting those requirements will result in a refusal. Having their no recourse to public funds restriction lifted is not currently one of those requirements, so no one should have been refused on this basis.

■ Motor Vehicles: Noise

Damian Hinds: [57221]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to give powers to the police to tackle illegally modified exhausts for (a) cars and (b) motorcycles.

Damian Hinds:

[\[57222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Police and Crime Commissioners on tackling vehicle nuisance in residential areas.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Any form of anti-social, dangerous or inconsiderate behaviour involving vehicles is a serious issue.

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

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

This will strengthen the law and send a clear message that antisocial vehicles will not be tolerated.

■ **Police: White Papers**

Ben Obese-Jecty:

[\[58710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish the police reform White Paper.

Dame Diana Johnson:

We have been working closely with policing in the development of these important reforms. The new Joint Home Office and Policing Reform Team, which includes secondees from the National Police Chiefs' Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and other policing organisations, have been closely involved in helping to shape the police reform proposals and development of the White Paper.

We will provide an update in due course.

■ **Seasonal Workers: Agriculture**

Perran Moon:

[\[57846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to secure seasonal workers for the (a) horticulture and (b) agriculture sector.

Seema Malhotra:

On 25 February, the Government announced that the Seasonal Worker route had been extended for five years, with 45,000 visas available for 2025, consisting of 43,000 for horticulture and agriculture and 2,000 for the poultry sector. The Government keeps the Seasonal Worker route under regular review.

■ Serious Violence Reduction Orders

Helen Maguire:

[\[57961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to (a) extend beyond the current trial areas and (b) make permanent the pilot of Serious Violence Reduction Orders.

Dame Diana Johnson:

Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) were piloted for two years throughout Merseyside, Sussex, Thames Valley and West Midlands police force areas. The pilot took place between 19 April 2023 and 18 April 2025.

The final independent evaluation of the pilot, due this Summer, will look to understand the effectiveness of SVROs in reducing reoffending and knife carrying. These insights will be critical in informing future decisions on whether the orders will be rolled out nationally.

■ Visas: British National (Overseas)

Sarah Olney:

[\[57311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her Department's White paper entitled Restoring control over the immigration system, published on 12 May 2025, on British National (Overseas) Visa holders.

Seema Malhotra:

The British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) route was launched on 31 January 2021 in response to China's passing of the National Security Law. The route reflects the UK's historic and moral commitment to those people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(O) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997.

The Government is committed to supporting members of the Hong Kong community who have relocated to the UK and those who may come here in future.

Further details of all measures announced in the Immigration White Paper will be set out in the normal way in due course, and where necessary, will be subject to consultation.

■ Visas: Digital Technology

Claire Hanna:

[\[57409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many eVisa errors were reported using the online portal in the last six months.

Claire Hanna:

[\[57410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many eVisa errors remain unresolved.

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.

■ **Wildlife: Crime****Sir John Hayes:**[\[57611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been arrested for offences related to wildlife and timber trafficking as part of Operation Thunder in each of the last five years.

Dame Diana Johnson:

The primary objective of Operation Thunder is to increase seizures of items being illicitly trafficked, and use those seizures as the basis to initiate investigations into the organised groups around the world responsible for that trafficking. As a result, while no arrests have been recorded during the four-week period when Operation Thunder is active, that is not reflective of the full impact of subsequent investigations.

Border Force and the NCA have made zero arrests related to wildlife crime in the last five years during the four weeks per annum that Operation Thunder is active.

However, investigations can often be complex, with criminality occurring across international jurisdictions, so the arrest phase can occur post-seizure of any illicit items seized rather than be contained to the four weeks of the exercise.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION■ **Written Questions****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[57739\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether there is a limit on the number of ordinary written parliamentary questions that Rt hon. and hon. Members can table in hard copy on a sitting day.

Nick Smith:

There is no limit to the number of questions for ordinary written answer which a Member may table in hard copy on each sitting day (see Erskine May, 25th Edition, [paragraph 22.4](#)).

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: AtkinsRéal****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[58755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to her Department's transparency data entitled MHCLG: spending over

£25,000, March 2025, published on 28 April 2025, what the spending to AtkinsRéalis UK Limited, reference Consultancy was for.

Alex Norris:

The contract with AtkinsRéalis UK Limited is for the audit of the government approved accreditation schemes who have the responsibility for maintaining the quality of energy performance certificates. This contract provides assurance that the requirements of section 22 of the Energy Performance of the Buildings (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 are being met.

■ **Tees Valley Combined Authority: Finance**

Andy McDonald: [\[58616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 3 April 2025 entitled Local Government Best Value, HCWS576, whether her Department has taken recent steps to issue guidance to other Departments on strengthening assurance requirements for (a) new and (b) ongoing funding for the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Jim McMahon:

Under the department's stewardship and the Best Value Notice issued on 3 April, Tees Valley Combined Authority is leading its own improvement efforts and working with local partners to build on the progress made following the independent Tees Valley Review. It remains the responsibility of relevant ministers and Senior Responsible Owners overseeing a grant programme to ensure they have sufficient assurance and performance management arrangements that an authority has the capacity and capability to deliver a programme effectively.

Andy McDonald: [\[58617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 3 April 2025 entitled Local Government Best Value, HCWS576, whether her Department's quarterly engagement with the Tees Valley Combined Authority includes consideration of the management of the Transport for City Regions funding allocation.

Jim McMahon:

While individual funding programmes are managed and assured independently by their respective departments, an ongoing assessment of the authority's progress against the best value notice will be based on a holistic judgement of all available information and considered engagement with the authority

JUSTICE**■ Abortion: Convictions and Prosecutions**

Sammy Wilson: [57624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many males have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted for unlawful abortions in England and Wales in each of the last ten years.

Sammy Wilson: [57625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many females have been (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted for unlawful abortion in England and Wales in each of the last ten years.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of prosecutions across England and Wales in the Outcomes by Offences data tool, that can be downloaded from the Criminal Justice Statistics landing page here: [Criminal justice statistics - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/criminal-justice-statistics).

The offences that constitute unlawful abortion include procuring an illegal abortion under sections 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, as well as child destruction under section 1 of the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929.

Information on the number of males and females who were proceeded against and convicted for these offences is available within the published data and can be accessed by filtering the 'overall volumes' dataset by sex. This data is held on a principal-offence basis and therefore reports information relating to the most serious offence that a defendant was dealt for.

■ Driving under Influence: Drugs

Sir John Hayes: [57204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will take steps to introduce mandatory prison sentences for people convicted of drug driving offences in cases where no accident has occurred.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The safety of our roads is an absolute priority for this Government. That is why the Department for Transport is committed to delivering a new Road Safety Strategy – the first in over a decade. They will set out next steps on this in due course.

While independent judges decide sentences, we are committed to making sure the courts have the sentencing powers to ensure punishments fit the severity of the crime.

Provisions in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (the Act) increased the maximum penalty from 14 years' imprisonment to life for the offences of causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs, and causing death by dangerous driving.

We continue to work alongside the Department for Transport to ensure sentencing law for driving offences is appropriate.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Amanda Martin:

[57910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much the Legal Aid Agency paid in fees to (a) Kingsley Napley LLP, (b) Leigh Day LLP, (c) Wilson Solicitors LLP, (d) Bindmans LLP and (e) Duncan Lewis LLP in (i) 2021-22, (ii) 2022-23, (iii) 2023-24 and (iv) 2024-25.

Sarah Sackman:

The requested information for financial years 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-24 can be found in the table below:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Bindmans LLP	£2,889,044.98	£3,567,543.29	£3,434,244.42
Duncan Lewis Solicitor LTD	£29,281,007.13	£26,328,354.77	£33,111,592.51
Kingsley Napley LLP	£1,103.00	£19,784.00	£25,553.00
Leigh Day	£1,033,994.11	£761,937.35	£525,154.12
Wilson Solicitors LLP	£3,713,641.93	£2,616,516.78	£3,859,081.76

Information relating to closed case expenditure in legal aid funded cases is published on a quarterly basis as part of the Legal Aid Agency's [Official Statistics](#). Data relating to financial year 24-25 is due for publication on June 2026.

Information broken down by financial year, legal aid provider, and type of legal aid can be viewed on the [Provider explorer](#) dashboard of the [Legal aid provider completions and starts statistics](#) data visualisation tool.

Please note that Kingsley Napley LLP no longer hold a legal aid contract. The firm withdrew from its criminal legal aid contract on 15 September 2023 and its civil legal aid contract on 31 August 2024. Expenditure in subsequent years represents bills paid relating to work carried out whilst the contract was live.

■ Lucy Connolly

Suella Braverman:

[57287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has considered compassionate measures for Lucy Connolly.

Suella Braverman:

[57288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has made an assessment of Lucy Connolly's condition in prison.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

We cannot disclose personal information about an individual prisoner.

Suella Braverman:

[\[57290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department plans to review the case of Lucy Connolly.

Alex Davies-Jones:

The Court of Appeal has considered all the evidence put before them in this case and refused the application for leave to appeal against the sentence. It would not be appropriate for any Minister of Government to comment on or intervene in such a decision of the independent judiciary, and as such the Government has no plans to review this case.

If an individual has appealed unsuccessfully and exhausted the usual routes of appeal, they are able to apply to the Criminal Case Review Commission.

■ Ministry of Justice: Civil Servants

John Cooper:

[\[57563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many permanent civil servants in her Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Alex Davies-Jones:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their business units or, for example, have returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis.

■ Prisoners' Release

Sir John Hayes:

[\[57612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will publish a list of offences that are eligible for automatic release after serving 40% of a prison sentence.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The previous Government left the criminal justice system in an unconscionable state, with the prison system days from collapse. To prevent the risk of gridlock across the Criminal Justice System, we had no choice but to take decisive action to stop our prisons overflowing and keep the public safe. On 10 September 2024, the Government therefore took the unavoidable step to move the release point for certain standard determinate sentences from 50% to 40% ('SDS40').

Certain offences have been excluded from the SDS40 change including sex offences irrespective of sentence length; serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more; specified offences linked to domestic abuse irrespective of sentence length

(including stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour and non-fatal strangulation); as well as offences concerning national security.

The legislation which covers eligibility for SDS40 is publicly available online, for example here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/844/schedule/made> ; and <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/1331/article/3/made>.

Once released, offenders will be subject to the same set of strict licence conditions that would apply had they been released at a 50% automatic release point and will be liable to recall to prison if they do not comply with these conditions or are judged to be a risk to public safety.

■ Prisoners' Transfers

Robert Jenrick:

[58222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving sentences in closed prisons will become eligible for transfer to open prisons under the early transfer rules that came into force on 9 June 2025; and how many prisoners are eligible by (a) primary offence type and (b) sentence length.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

The Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) is not a new scheme; it was first introduced in March 2023 under the previous Government. On 9 June 2025, the scheme was extended to allow eligible prisoners to transfer to the open estate 36 months prior to release. Due to being in the early stages of operationalising this change, our staff are still in the process of conducting risk assessments to determine eligibility.

There is limited eligibility for the scheme; all sexual, terrorist and violent offenders serving a sentence of at least four years are barred. Furthermore, prisoners are assessed against clear criteria to ensure that their move will not pose a serious risk to the public. We can immediately return any offender in the Category D estate back to closed conditions at any point if there is any evidence of an increased risk, and Governors retain the discretion to rule prisoners out of moves if there are serious concerns.

■ Sexual Offences: Medical Treatments

Sir John Hayes:

[57203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will set a timeline for the introduction of mandatory chemical suppressants for sex offenders.

Sir Nicholas Dakin:

As set out by the Lord Chancellor's oral statement on 22 May 2025, it is vital that people convicted of sexual offences are robustly managed to ensure the public are protected to the fullest degree.

We are committed to increasing the use of medication to manage problematic sexual arousal for sex offenders by expanding the existing feasibility pilot in the Southwest to

two additional regions, which will see the service extend from four to 20 prisons as a first step.

The Government wants to learn from the pilots and experience in other jurisdictions, as it takes policy in this area forward.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[57239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Northern Ireland on waiting times for ADHD (a) medication and (b) treatment for children.

Hilary Benn:

This Government is committed to working with the Executive to transform its public services and improve outcomes for people living in Northern Ireland, including children. That is why I and other UK Government Ministers regularly engage with Executive Ministers in Northern Ireland, including the Health Minister, to discuss plans to improve public services.

However, I also recognise that health is devolved in Northern Ireland and directly tackling waiting lists is a matter for the NI Health Minister and his department. I welcome the recent steps he has taken to improve waiting times. Improving outcomes in Northern Ireland will take time and we will continue to be an active partner and work supportively with the Executive as best we can.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Civil Servants

John Cooper:

[57590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Hilary Benn:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their cost centres or, for example, have returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Animal Experiments

Dan Norris:

[\[56724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions her Department plans to have with industry stakeholders on the development of a roadmap for phasing out the use of animals in scientific research.

Feryal Clark:

The Labour Manifesto includes a commitment to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing” and the Government is drafting a strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods.

The Government has been consulting industry, academia and civil society as this process unfolds. Minister Vallance hosted a roundtable on 05.09.24 with industry representatives and officials have kept in regular contact with industry since then.

■ Animal Experiments: Artificial Intelligence

Ruth Jones:

[\[57327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to support the (a) development and (b) deployment of artificial intelligence to accelerate the transition away from the use of animals in scientific research and testing.

Feryal Clark:

The Labour Manifesto commits to “partner with scientists, industry, and civil society as we work towards the phasing out of animal testing”. While it is not yet possible to replace all animal use, we support the development and application of approaches that replace, reduce and refine animal use in research (the 3Rs), including via artificial intelligence. The Prime Minister launched the AI Opportunities Action Plan in January which outlined 50 actions needed to drive up the development and deployment of AI.

The Government will publish a strategy to support the development, validation and uptake of alternative methods later this year.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Disinformation

Victoria Collins:

[\[57828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to protect girls and young women from the impact of sexualised AI deepfakes.

Feryal Clark:

Sharing or threatening to share a deepfake intimate image without consent is illegal. Synthetically created content is regulated by the Online Safety Act where it is shared

on an in-scope service and is illegal content or content harmful to children. Government is also legislating to ban the non-consensual creation of sexualised deepfakes in the Data (Use and Access) Bill.

Where a sexualised deepfake is of a child this is child sexual abuse material and is illegal, and Government has introduced an offence in the Crime and Policing Bill to criminalise AI models optimised to create this content.

Victoria Collins:

[\[57832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Home Office on protecting (a) elderly and (b) vulnerable people against AI-generated scams in the form of deepfake content.

Feryal Clark:

DSIT regularly engages with Home Office on ongoing efforts to protect users from online harms, including AI-Generated scams. AI generated content is regulated by the Online Safety Act where it is shared on an in-scope service and constitutes either illegal content or content which is harmful to children.

In March this year the Act's illegal harms duties came into force, with fraud captured as a priority offence. User-to-user services must take preventative measures to stop fraudulent content from appearing and swiftly remove it where it does. Search services must minimise fraudulent content from appearing in results. This includes AI generated deepfake scams.

■ **Broadband: Newton Abbot**

Martin Wrigley:

[\[57480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to improve broadband connectivity in rural areas of Newton Abbot constituency.

Chris Bryant:

According to the independent website Thinkbroadband.com, over 98% of homes and businesses in the Newton Abbot constituency can access superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 83% have access to a gigabit-capable broadband connection (>1000 Mbps).

To improve coverage further, Openreach is delivering a Project Gigabit contract across parts of Devon and Somerset. Approximately 1,500 premises in the Newton Abbot constituency are currently in scope of this contract, the majority of which are in rural areas. The contract is targeted at bringing gigabit-capable broadband to homes and businesses that are unlikely to be otherwise reached by suppliers' commercial rollout.

■ **Broadband: South West**

Gideon Amos:

[\[58537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to take steps (a) with Building Digital UK to support the timely delivery of full fibre

broadband to rural communities under the Phase 2 Superfast Broadband Programme in (i) west Somerset and (ii) Devon and (b) to encourage improved communication between Airband and affected (A) residents and (B) local stakeholders in the parishes of (1) West Hatch, (2) Hatch Beauchamp, (3) Bickenhall, (4) Curland, (5) Staple Fitzpaine, (6) Corfe, (7) Orchard Portman, (8) Stoke St Mary and (9) Pitminster.

Chris Bryant:

Building Digital UK (BDUK) is working with Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) and Airband to identify premises which will no longer be connected via its Superfast contracts. Premises that have been descoped from the Airband contracts and are not in any suppliers' commercial plans will be eligible for support through Project Gigabit.

Officials will continue to work closely with suppliers, residents and local stakeholders across west Somerset and Devon to improve broadband connectivity across the region.

■ **Cybersecurity**

Jim Shannon:

[\[56781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to improve the UK's cyber security.

Feryal Clark:

The cyber security of the UK is a priority for the government. This year we will introduce the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill to improve UK cyber defences and better secure our essential services and the IT infrastructure they rely upon. The government offers free guidance, tools and training to help businesses and organisations improve their cyber resilience. This includes a new Cyber Governance Code of Practice to help boards and directors manage digital risks, and the Cyber Essentials scheme which is highly effective in protecting businesses against cyber attacks. The PSTI Act, along with codes of practice on AI, software and apps, are helping protect organisations at scale by making technology secure by design. Later this year, the government will publish a new National Cyber Strategy setting out how we will approach the challenges and opportunities of cyber security.

■ **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Civil Servants**

John Cooper:

[\[57586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many permanent civil servants in his Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Feryal Clark:

At any point in time, there is likely to be a small number of individuals who have been displaced due to restructures within their business units or, for example, have

returned from a loan from another department and their role no longer exists. The exact number changes on a day-to-day basis.

■ Digital Technology: Public Sector

Samantha Niblett:

[58394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 55785 on Public Sector: Digital Technology, what discussions his Department has had with the Digital Commercial Centre of Excellence on the impact of software licensing for Government software procurement on the digital transformation strategy.

Feryal Clark:

The [State of Digital Government review](#), [A blueprint for modern digital government](#) and the [Performance Review of Digital Spend](#), all published this year, have highlighted the need to reform digital purchasing.

The Government has launched a Digital Commercial Centre of Excellence, containing experts from the Digital and Commercial Functions, within the Government Digital Service (GDS) in my department. It is pursuing multiple strategies to improve value for money and outcomes including central buying of commodity services, development of a digital sourcing strategy, creation of technical enablers and joined-up management of strategic digital suppliers.

■ Elections: Disinformation

Manuela Perteghella:

[57797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle (a) misinformation and (b) disinformation in elections.

Feryal Clark:

The Government takes the integrity and security of our democratic processes seriously, including from the threat posed by mis/disinformation.

The UK's Online Safety Act captures disinformation aimed at disrupting elections where it is a criminal offence in the scope of the regulatory framework. This includes the Foreign Interference Offence, which requires all in-scope companies to act against a range of state-linked disinformation and interference online.

As the department responsible for managing the risk posed by online mis/disinformation targeting electoral processes, DSIT also supports ongoing work through the government's Defending Democracy Taskforce to tackle the full scope of threats to democracy.

■ Electronic Government

Chi Onwurah:

[57230]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he plans to complete the integration of the Government Gateway with the gov.uk one login system.

Feryal Clark:

Government Gateway is a separate, existing authentication and identity service for cross-government digital services and is managed by HMRC. There are no plans to integrate Government Gateway with GOV.UK One Login, but in time services that use Government Gateway will move over to using GOV.UK One Login instead.

GOV.UK One Login is the government's sign-in and identity verification solution, enabling users to create an account, log in, and prove their identity to access government services. Our plan is to onboard all central government services during this Parliament, including those currently accessed through Government Gateway.

Chi Onwurah:[\[57231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions (a) he has and (b) his officials have had with trade unions on the digitalisation of government.

Feryal Clark:

I recently met Prospect Union to discuss our plans for digitising government. My officials met with representatives from the Trade Union Congress (TUC) several times to discuss the Blueprint for Modern Digital Government, both before and after publication. Myself and my officials in DSIT continue to explore opportunities for trade union engagement on emerging technologies and public sector digital transformation.

■ Electronic Government: Proof of Identity**Mr Richard Holden:**[\[57396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the gov.uk One Login system's certification with the register of digital verification services has been revoked.

Feryal Clark:

In April 2025, GOV.UK One Login's Trust Framework certification was suspended due to a supply chain issue where one supplier allowed their certification to lapse. This suspension is not due to any change in One Login's product, approach, or security. GOV.UK One Login is working to recertify as a priority.

■ Geoengineering: Finance**Sir John Hayes:**[\[57205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department has funded Stratospheric Aerosol Injection in the last three years.

Feryal Clark:

The government has not funded any field-based Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI).

The Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) is an independent research body, and they are conducting cautious, controlled research aimed at improving

understanding of the risks and impacts of Solar Radiation Modification (SRM). This will produce important information for decisions around the world.

ARIA's programme includes laboratory-based research and some small-scale field trials to explore the fundamental science around SRM. This does not involve releasing materials into the stratosphere. All field trials will be subject to an environmental impact and legal assessment, which will be made publicly available before any outdoor experiment takes place. They will be limited in size, scale, and time-bound, so the effects dissipate within 24 hours or are fully reversible. ARIA are not funding experiments that release toxic materials to the environment.

■ Higher Education: Research

Chi Onwurah: [\[57234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure the continuation of UK research in the higher education sector.

Feryal Clark:

The government is protecting record levels R&D investment, allocating £20.4bn across departments in 2025/26. DSIT's overall R&D budget will be £13.9bn in 2025/26, including £8.8bn for UKRI to support talent, infrastructure, and innovation. This funding ensures the continuation of research in higher education and supports key priorities such as building R&I talent, fostering student startups, and maintaining Quality-Related (QR) funding, which was around £2bn in 2024/25.

■ Information Commissioner's Office

Mr Will Forster: [\[57597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will review the role of the Information Commissioner's Office.

Chris Bryant:

We have considered the role of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) during the design of the Data Use & Access Bill. This Bill modernises the ICO's governance structure, introduces a new framework with a principal objective and duties to provide strategic direction to its data protection activities. The Bill increases transparency and accountability to Parliament, businesses and the public; and supports the public with strengthened complaints procedures and enforcement powers. We hope it will soon be enacted.

■ Internet: Advertising

Chi Onwurah: [\[57232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to ensure that the right to object to targeted online advertising is upheld under consent-or-pay models; and whether his Department plans to provide updated guidance on this issue in the context of the Information Commissioner's Office's guidance on consent-or-pay.

Chris Bryant:

The Information Commissioner's Office's (ICO) guidance on this matter states that pay and consent models can be implemented in accordance with the data protection legislation, so long as websites ensure that consent to targeted advertising is fully informed and freely given. The guidance sets out a framework of factors that are important to consider when assessing whether a "consent or pay" model meets the required standard of consent.

The Government will continue to engage with businesses, the ICO and other stakeholders to monitor operation of these models.

■ Software: Government Departments**Samantha Niblett:****[58395]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 55786 on Public Sector: Digital Technology, whether his Department's digital transformation strategy will include the (a) financial impact of software assets on departmental budgets and (b) impact of identified dependencies on those assets on cost efficiencies.

Feryal Clark:

The [State of Digital Government review](#), [A blueprint for modern digital government](#) and the [Performance Review of Digital Spend](#), all published this year, have highlighted the need to reform digital purchasing.

The Government has launched a Digital Commercial Centre of Excellence, containing experts from the Digital and Commercial Functions, within the Government Digital Service (GDS) in my department. It is pursuing multiple strategies to improve value for money and outcomes including central buying of commodity services, development of a digital sourcing strategy, creation of technical enablers and joined-up management of strategic digital suppliers.

■ Voice over Internet Protocol: Impact Assessments**Victoria Collins:****[57825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether his Department conducted a Disability Impact Assessment of the Public Switched Telephone Network migration.

Chris Bryant:

The Department has not conducted a Disability Impact Assessment. The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) migration is an industry-led programme and does not result from a government decision.

The Government is committed to ensuring that any risks arising from the industry-led migration of the PSTN to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) are mitigated for all customers across the UK. In November 2024, at Government's behest, all major communication providers agreed additional safeguards to protect vulnerable customers, including for people living with disabilities.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Termination of Employment****Mr Peter Bedford:**[\[58467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many permanent civil servants in his Department had their contract of employment terminated as a result of poor performance in the (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25 financial years.

Ian Murray:

No permanent civil servants working in the Scotland Office had their contract of employment terminated as a result of poor performance in the (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25 financial years.

TRANSPORT**■ Active Travel England: Compulsory Purchase****Freddie van Mierlo:**[\[58885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance Active Travel England have issued on the use of compulsory purchase order powers for active travel routes.

Simon Lightwood:

To date Active Travel England has not issued any guidance on the use of compulsory purchase order powers. A range of approaches to establishing rural active travel routes will be set out in guidance due to be published later this year, including case studies on the use of compulsory purchase orders.

■ Biofuels**Graham Stuart:**[\[57217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make it her policy to transition from E10 to E15 fuel.

Lilian Greenwood:

The UK Government made E10 the standard (or 'premium') grade petrol in Great Britain in September 2021. Previously the grade supplied at UK forecourts contained a lower bioethanol content known as E5.

In making the decision to mandate E10 the Department carried out extensive consultation and undertook a comprehensive public information campaign. The UK did not move to E10 without assurance that vehicles on UK roads were ready to safely use higher blends of bioethanol, and that such a transition would align with industry agreed fuel standards for petrol.

The industry agreed standard for petrol, EN228, currently only permits fuel suppliers to supply petrol containing up to 10% ethanol (E10). The Department continually reviews all policies relevant to biofuels, including on E10. Any changes to fuel

regulation would require alignment with industry led fuel standards for petrol and a consultation.

■ Department for Transport: Civil Servants

John Cooper:

[57587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many permanent civil servants in her Department are staff without assigned posts; and how many are placed in an equivalent (a) people action team, (b) priority movers list, (c) redeployment register, (d) talent pool and (e) skills match hub in the most recent period for which data is available.

Mike Kane:

There are no permanent civil servants within DfTc and the Agencies without assigned posts.

The Department for Transport (DfTc and the Agencies) has a priority movers list/redeployment register. Within a payroll workforce of over 16000*, the number of people currently on the register for DfTc and the Agencies as of 6th June 2025 is 61.

*Payroll staff total headcount [DfT: workforce management information, April 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

■ Electric Vehicles: Exports

Ian Roome:

[57799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of UK-manufactured electric vehicles exported to foreign countries on UK environmental targets.

Lilian Greenwood:

Industry data shows nearly 80% of vehicles made in the UK are exported. We do not expect this to impact the Government's ability to meet the targets set out through the Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate. A thriving zero emission vehicle export market is crucial to supporting a domestic automotive industry that will drive growth, deliver jobs, and support the UK's environmental goals.

■ Motor Insurance

Perran Moon:

[57570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress her Department has made on (a) reducing insurance costs for drivers and (b) the cross-Government motor insurance taskforce.

Lilian Greenwood:

This Government is committed to tackle the high costs of motor insurance. The cross-Government motor insurance taskforce, launched in October, is comprised of ministers from relevant government departments and the Financial Conduct Authority and Competition and Markets Authority. The taskforce is supported by a separate

stakeholder panel of industry experts representing the insurance, motor, and consumer sector.

This Taskforce has a strategic remit to set the direction for UK Government policy, identifying short- and long-term actions for departments that may contribute to stabilising or reducing premiums. It will look at the increased insurance costs on consumers and the insurance industry, including how this impacts different demographics, geographies, and communities.

The Government will provide updates in due course.

■ Transport: Tees Valley

Andy McDonald: [\[58618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 3 April 2025 on Local Government Best Value, HCWS576, what assessment her Department has made of the capacity of the Tees Valley Combined Authority to (a) manage and (b) account for the use of the Transport for City Regions funding allocation between 2027-28 and 2031-32.

Simon Lightwood:

The Chancellor announced the £15.6 billion Transport for City Regions settlements on 4 June 2025. The settlements provide long-term funding certainty, including revenue funding, ensuring city regions have the resources they need to effectively manage programmes. The Department will also work closely with Mayoral Strategic Authorities on a governance framework to monitor delivery progress and expenditure. Any relevant findings from the Best Value process will be duly considered as appropriate.

Andy McDonald: [\[58619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 3 April 2025 on Local Government Best Value, HCWS576, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of Tees Valley Combined Authority's (a) management of and (b) accounting for the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement funding allocation between 2022-23 and 2026-27.

Simon Lightwood:

The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) play a key role in improving local networks across the country. Alongside significant capital investment, CRSTS provides revenue funding to help places manage delivery effectively. Tees Valley's programme business case was assessed by Government, and the Department works closely with Mayoral Combined Authorities to monitor delivery progress and expenditure through an agreed governance framework. Any relevant findings from the Best Value process will be duly considered as appropriate.

TREASURY**■ Arms Length Bodies: Parliamentary Scrutiny****Mike Wood:****[57252]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 2 April 2025 to Question 41289 on Arms Length Bodies: Parliamentary Scrutiny, through which mechanisms (a) public corporations and (b) private companies owned by the Government are accountable to Parliament.

Darren Jones:

Detail on arrangements for Parliamentary accountability and governance of government companies and public corporations are set out in Annex 7.3 of Managing Public Money.

The precise arrangements will vary from body to body, but will be set out in each body's framework document, or equivalent, which describes the governance arrangements between the body and its sponsor government department. Framework documents are published on GOV.UK, along with guidance on their use and standard templates for each type of body:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/framework-documents-collection>

In general, accountability to Parliament will be via the ministers of a public corporation's sponsor department and, if that body is subject to the rules set out in Managing Public Money, through the public corporation's accounting officer or accountable person.

Private companies owned by the Government, where they do not meet the classification standards for a public corporation, are instead classified by the ONS as part of central government. They are financially consolidated into their sponsor department and accountable to Parliament in the same manner as any other non-departmental public body.

Ministers of a central government company's sponsor department are responsible for the body in the house; and the most senior executive in the company as an Accounting Officer is directly accountable to Parliament via the Public Accounts Committee for the use of public funds.

Public corporation status is formally determined by the Office for National Statistics on the basis of international economic statistical standards. Public corporations are generally self-funding and do not normally receive funding voted by Parliament. This category covers a significant range of bodies with differing levels of government control and not all bodies classified as public corporations are owned by the Government. They are subject to levels of control deemed appropriate by the relevant sponsor department, agreed via their framework document, and approved by the Treasury.

■ Childcare: Tax Allowances**Ben Goldsborough:** [\[57834\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of enabling parents to be paid their childcare funding using their government tax-free childcare account.

Darren Jones:

Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) provides parents with financial support with the aim of allowing parents to work and earn more. It enables parents access funding of up to £2,000 per child for children up to 11 years-old (16 and up to £4,000 if the child is disabled). In addition to this, TFC caters to self-employed parents, and parents that work irregular hours and may be unable to access traditional childcare provisions.

Since its introduction in 2017, take-up of TFC has consistently increased. For the Financial Year 2024-25, approximately 826,000 families used TFC for 1,085,000 children. In March 2025, 580,000 families used TFC for 709,000 children, higher than any previous month since TFC began.

■ Free School Meals: Northern Ireland**Sorcha Eastwood:** [\[57798\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Statement of 4 June 2025, HCWS682, on School Food, what estimate she has made of the potential Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland following the expansion of free school meals to all children in households in receipt of Universal Credit.

Darren Jones:

The Barnett formula is applied when departmental budgets change – not when departments announce how they are spending their budgets.

When changes to the Department for Education's budget were confirmed at Spending Review 2025 on 11 June, the Barnett formula was applied in the usual way. The published Block Grant Transparency document provides a detailed breakdown of how the block grants are calculated and the next version will be published in due course.

■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[57738\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 23 April 2025 to Question 44962 on Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness, whether the 2025-26 baseline for the 15% saving in administration budgets includes departmental efficiency savings announced in July 2024.

Darren Jones:

The savings and efficiencies announced in July 2024 helped to address spending pressures identified through the public spending audit. These included a 2% savings against government administration budgets.

In the Spring Statement, the Chancellor announced that all departments would be expected to make a 15% reduction in their administration budgets by 2029-30. This used 2025-26 budgets as published at Autumn Budget 24 as the baseline, which included in-year changes, for example employers' National Insurance Contributions.

■ **Investment: Fraud**

Sarah Bool:

[\[57939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has issued tax liability demands to people who have been victims of investment fraud; and what steps she is taking to review such cases to avoid penalising victims of financial crime.

James Murray:

HMRC is responsible for managing the tax system and is required by law to collect tax due. It must apply the law correctly and individuals are responsible for their own tax affairs.

Where individuals find themselves with unexpected tax bills as a result of taking bad advice from a third party on an investments scheme, this does not mitigate any tax that is legally due.

HMRC works with individuals to understand the facts of each case and only pursues tax where there is a genuine tax liability. It tailors its approach to individual circumstances and takes a supportive and proportionate approach to recovering tax due, including offering 'Time to Pay' instalment arrangements where appropriate, and providing extra support for customer who need it.

■ **Local Government: Reorganisation**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[57280\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how local government restructuring scores on public (a) spending and (b) borrowing.

Darren Jones:

Any changes to local government spending as a result of local government reorganisation will be reflected in the OBR forecast via estimates of local authority self-financed expenditure, with associated impacts on overall fiscal metrics, including public sector net borrowing (PSNB). Any central government funding for restructuring would be allocated within departmental budgets in the usual way.

■ **Orchestras: Tax Allowances**

Victoria Collins:

[\[57824\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of changes to orchestral tax relief on touring orchestras' ability to fund UK charity concerts and community programmes.

James Murray:

The UK provides world-leading support for orchestras: at Autumn Budget 2024, the Government confirmed that from 1 April 2025, the rate of Orchestra Tax Relief (OTR) will be set at the generous rate of 45%.

From April 2024, qualifying expenditure is expenditure incurred on goods or services that are ‘used or consumed in the UK’, replacing the previous rule that qualifying costs were those incurred on goods and services provided from the UK or EEA. To ease the transition to the new rule, orchestras with concerts in train on 1 April 2024 were permitted to continue claiming relief on goods and services provided from within the EEA until 31 March 2025.

It is appropriate to refocus orchestra tax relief on UK expenditure now that the UK has left the EU. Under the new rule, the relief incentivises activity within the UK, rather than the UK and the EEA. This does not prevent qualifying productions from touring in the EEA (nor elsewhere).

As with all tax policy changes, a Tax Information and Impact Note was published in 2023 which can be found here: [Administrative changes to the creative industry tax reliefs - GOV.UK](#).

■ **Parental Leave: Expenditure**

Chris Hinchliff: **[57157]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much was spent on (a) maternity, (b) paternity and (c) adoption leave in the most recent period for which data is available.

James Murray:

HMRC hold information on the amounts paid by employers to employees for Statutory Parental Pay, but do not hold this for additional ‘occupational’ pay offered by employers.

The table below shows the amounts paid for statutory pay in 2023/24 (the latest complete year available).

	VALUE OF EMPLOYEE CLAIMS (£MILLION)
Statutory Maternity Pay	3,338.3
Statutory Paternity Pay	69.0
Statutory Adoption Pay	25.1

Notes:

1) Data collected using HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) and extracted in December 2024. RTI is subject to revision or updates.

2) Total value of claims rounded to nearest £100,000.

■ Religious Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

Katie Lam:

[\[57514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the UK's exit from the EU on levels of VAT for (a) repairs and (b) maintenance payments for places of worship.

James Murray:

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. VAT is the UK's second largest tax, forecast to raise £180.4 billion in 2025/26. Taxation is a vital source of revenue that helps to fund vital public services.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport administers the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. This provides grants towards VAT paid on repairs and maintenance to the nation's listed places of worship.

■ Small Businesses: Taxation

David Smith:

[\[57550\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she plans to differentiate between small family businesses and major corporations for overall tax liabilities.

James Murray:

The Government provides support through the tax system to small businesses in a range of ways.

The Small Profits Rate and taper rate mean almost 70% of actively trading companies are taxed at a rate of 19%, with only 10% of businesses paying the full 25%.

Within National Insurance, the Government has protected the smallest businesses by increasing the Employment Allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, which means that 865,000 employers will pay no employer NICs at all this year.

The Government also increased the Small Employer Compensation rate, which compensates small employers for the additional costs of paying National Insurance when employees receive statutory payments (e.g. Statutory Maternity Pay).

At £90,000, the UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU country and the joint highest in the OECD. This keeps the majority of businesses out of the VAT regime altogether.

Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) is available to businesses with a single property below a set rateable value. Eligible properties under £12,000 will receive 100 per cent relief, which means over a third of businesses in England (more than 700,000) pay no

business rates at all. There is also tapered support available to properties valued between £12,000 and £15,000, which an additional c.60,000 businesses benefit from.

■ Welfare State: Advisory Services

Ben Lake: [\[57316\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential cost savings to public services resulting from investment in independent social welfare advice services.

Darren Jones:

The Government recognises the important role that independent advice services play in supporting individuals.

For example, DWP provide grant funding to Citizens Advice, who deliver Help to Claim support for customers to apply for Universal Credit. Help to Claim reduces the number of Universal Credit benefit queries DWP receive and enables work coaches to focus on work related activities.

In addition, the Money and Pensions Service, which is sponsored by DWP, continues to provide impartial, free money and pensions guidance directly to consumers.

DWP assesses the impacts from its investments, including public services efficiencies, in line with standard Treasury guidance.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Race Equality Engagement Group: Public Appointments

Claire Coutinho: [\[57724\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what process was used to appoint Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon as Chair of the Race Equality Engagement Group.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57725\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what process will be used to appoint members of the Race Equality Engagement Group.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57726\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to announce the members of the Race Equality Engagement Group.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57727\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to publish terms of reference for the Race Equality Engagement Group.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57728\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many full time equivalent civil service staff will be allocated to support the work of the Race Equality Engagement Group.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57729\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the members of the Race Equality Engagement Group will be remunerated.

Claire Coutinho: [\[57730\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether members of the Race Equality Engagement Group will subject to an assessment of any (a) potential and (b) actual conflicts of interest.

Seema Malhotra:

The appointment process for Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon and the other members of the Race Equality Engagement Group (REEG) was informal ministerial appointment, by invitation, following appropriate due diligence checks.

This government will publish the terms of reference for the REEG, and the full membership, in due course.

REEG members will not be remunerated but will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in respect of the work of the REEG.

Members are expected to declare any conflicts of interest and to recuse themselves from any work where such a conflict, or perceived conflict, may arise.

The REEG will be supported by the Race Equality Unit, in the Office for Equality and Opportunity, from its existing allocation of staff.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment: Older People

Jim Shannon: [\[57242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to provide support for older people to complete online job applications.

Alison McGovern:

DWP currently offers employment support for eligible customers of all ages, through the network of Jobcentres across the UK, and through contracted employment programmes. A dedicated offer for older jobseekers provides more tailored support for those affected by additional challenges such as out of date skills or qualifications or those who need help with CVs.

Work Coaches and employers are supported by 50 plus Champions who provide a critical layer of support through Jobcentres, to ensure the needs of older jobseekers are met. Recent examples of personalised activity include 50 plus Job Fairs, Mentoring Circles, peer to peer support, digital awareness sessions and confidence building, including assisting customers with their perceived digital capabilities, from basic IT skills to more complex tasks.

Employer and Partnership Teams in Jobcentres also work with a range of employers and partners to enhance the skills and employment support available locally for customers.

The Government is reforming Jobcentre Plus and creating a new service that will enable everyone to access support to find good, meaningful work, and support to help them progress in their careers. This includes an enhanced focus on skills and careers advice.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Laurence Turner: [58853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is able to produce statistics on PIP recipients broken down by (a) Output Areas and (b) lower layer Super Output Areas.

Sir Stephen Timms:

Information on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants by different geographic breakdowns can be found on [Stat Xplore](#). You can use the 'PIP Cases with Entitlement from 2019' dataset and the 'Geography' filter to narrow down to the breakdowns you require.

For further guidance on how to use Stat Xplore, please see the User Guide [here](#).

■ Universal Credit: Fylde

Mr Andrew Snowden: [57768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 51543 on Universal Credit: Fylde, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the impact of the new Fair Repayment Rate for Universal Credit debt deductions on households in Fylde constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

The Department collects detailed data on deductions from Universal Credit households and will be monitoring the effect of the Fair Repayment Rate over the coming months.

We regularly publish official statistics on deductions at the parliamentary constituency level - including the number of Universal Credit households with deductions and average amount deducted. The release scheduled for November 2025 will present deductions data up to August 2025, this is the first release that will show the effects of the Fair Repayment Rate.

The latest release of the deductions statistics can be found here:

[Universal Credit deductions statistics December 2023 to November 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

Mr Andrew Snowden: [57769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2025 to Question 51543 on Universal Credit: Fylde, how many Universal Credit claimants

have been affected by the change in the Fair Repayment Rate implemented from 30 April 2025 in Fylde constituency.

Sir Stephen Timms:

This information is not currently available.

The Fair Repayment Rate was implemented on the 30 April 2025 for Universal Credit claims with assessment periods starting on or after this date. However, the transition to the new policy will not be complete for all Universal Credit households until the end of June 2025. We estimate that once the transition to the Fair Repayment Rate is complete, it will benefit 1.2 million Universal Credit households by putting an average of £420 back into their pockets per year.

The Department regularly publishes data on Universal Credit deductions. The release scheduled for November 2025 will present deductions data up to August 2025, this is the first release that will show the effects of the Fair Repayment Rate.

The latest release of the deductions statistics can be found here:

[Universal Credit deductions statistics December 2023 to November 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces Commissioner Recruitment

Minister for the Armed Forces (Luke Pollard):

[\[HCWS700\]](#)

I am today announcing the launch of the recruitment campaign for the UK's first ever Armed Forces Commissioner (AFC) – an important step in this Government's commitment to renewing the nation's contract with those who serve.

As we set out in the Strategic Defence Review, people are fundamental to UK Defence and to delivering the transformation to which this Government is committed.

The creation of the AFC is a move of unprecedented support for our Armed Forces personnel and their families. The role will be subject to a full public appointment process, regulated and overseen by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

The AFC will be an independent champion for Service Personnel and their families, with authority and discretion to investigate a wide variety of welfare issues that impact Service life. This could include issues related to kit and equipment, unacceptable behaviours, or Service accommodation.

The Commissioner will have new powers extending beyond anything seen before, including unprecedented access to UK Defence sites to observe activity, access information and speak to personnel of all ranks and grades. The responsibilities of the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces will also transfer across to the AFC, who will continue to drive improvements and strengthen the fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Service Complaints System. It is critically important to ensure the highest confidence for the Armed Forces community in the handling of the Service Complaints process, in particular the independence and transparency of the system.

The preferred candidate to become the AFC will also be subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee (HCDC). This will allow the Committee to scrutinise the position of the preferred candidate and publish a report setting out its views on their suitability.

In addition to being independent from Defence, the Commissioner will strengthen Parliament's oversight, knowledge and scrutiny of issues facing our Armed Forces personnel and their families by producing annual and thematic reports into the welfare issues they face. This will enable Parliament to hold the Ministry of Defence to account to ensure changes to policy and process can be brought about to improve lives.

Applications for the AFC will close on 11 July 2025, with the option to extend by two weeks depending on the diversity and quality of the candidate field. Sifting, shortlisting, and interviews will follow. The preferred candidate is expected to be identified by October 2025, with the HCDC pre appointment hearing expected in November 2025. The successful candidate would then receive a confirmed offer of appointment subject to

appropriate security clearance. We expect to have the new Commissioner appointed by early 2026.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ The Establishment of the Patrick Finucane Inquiry

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Hilary Benn):

[\[HCWS699\]](#)

I wish to provide an update to the House on the Government's decision to establish an independent statutory inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane in February 1989.

Today, the Government has appointed the Rt Hon Sir Gary Hickinbottom as Chair of the Patrick Finucane Inquiry. The Inquiry is being established under section 1 of the Inquiries Act 2005, with full powers, including the power to compel the production of documents, and to summon witnesses to give evidence on oath. The Government has also today appointed The Baroness O'Loan and Francesca Del Mese as Assessors to the Inquiry under section 11 of the Inquiries Act.

The appointment of Sir Gary follows my announcement, on 11 September 2024, that the Government will establish an independent statutory inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane. This decision was in response to the 2019 judgment of the Supreme Court, which found that all the previous investigations into the murder had been insufficient to enable the State to discharge its obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The murder of Mr Finucane in front of his wife, Geraldine (who was also wounded), and his three children, was a barbarous and heinous crime and one which continues to highlight the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. I commend and support the tireless campaign of Mrs Finucane and her family in seeking answers to the brutal murder of their loved one and I am confident that this Inquiry will provide answers to the family who have suffered so terribly.

In determining who should Chair the Inquiry, I considered that in view of the nature of the evidence and questions to be tested by the Patrick Finucane Inquiry, a judicial chairperson, sitting alone without a panel and with two Assessors, would be most appropriate for the role.

Sir Gary has had a distinguished judicial career in England and Wales. He is currently President of Welsh Tribunals and member of the Judicial Openness and Transparency Board. He was made a full-time judge in 2000 and was appointed to a succession of judicial appointments in both the court and tribunal systems. In 2021, Sir Gary retired from the Court of Appeal to conduct a Commission of Inquiry into governance and corruption in the British Virgin Islands, on which he reported in April 2022.

The Baroness O'Loan is a life peer appointed to the House of Lords in 2009. She became a member of the Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee in January 2025. Prior to that, she was a member of various House of Lords Select Committees from 2010 to 2024. Baroness O'Loan was the first Police Ombudsman in Northern Ireland.

Francesca Del Mese is an international criminal and human rights lawyer with over 25 years of experience in rule of law and security sector reform, specialising in conflict-affected and fragile States and countries experiencing political transition. She serves as a Member of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal and is also a judge (Recorder) of the Crown Court of England and Wales.

I am delighted that Sir Gary Hickinbottom has accepted this important role as Chair of the Patrick Finucane Inquiry and that Baroness O’Loan and Francesca Del Mese have accepted the important roles of assessors to the Inquiry. I am confident that, together, their valuable knowledge, experience and professionalism will be of great benefit to the work of the Patrick Finucane Inquiry.

The Chair will now meet with the family and consult them on the Terms of Reference.