



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 February 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 28 February 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

### CONTENTS

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	<b>14</b>
BUSINESS AND TRADE	7	■ Cabinet Office: Disability	14
■ Beer and Gin: Exports	7	■ Civil Servants: Pay	15
■ British Steel: Energy	7	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	15
■ British Steel: Scunthorpe	7	■ Local Resilience Forums	16
■ Certification Officer: Reform	8	■ Manchester United: Qatar	16
■ Companies: Corporate Governance	8	■ Members and Ministers: Conflict of Interests	17
■ Construction: Contracts	9	■ Prime Ministers: Aviation	17
■ Department for Business and Trade: Ministerial Boxes	9	■ Public Duty Costs Allowance	17
■ Exports: Telephone Services	9	■ Public Sector: Procurement	18
■ Growth Hubs: Finance	10	■ Royal Mail Group: Vesa Equity Investment	19
■ Help to Grow Schemes	10	■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure	19
■ Home Ownership: Foreign Nationals	10	<b>CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	<b>19</b>
■ Industry: Northern Ireland	11	■ Arts	19
■ Iron and Steel: Recycling	12	■ Arts: Finance	21
■ Postal Services	12	■ BBC: Sign Language	21
■ Small Businesses: Advisory Services	12	■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Disability	22
■ Trade Agreements: Canada	12	■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Northern Ireland	23
■ Video Games: Exports	13	■ Flags: Pitcairn Islands	24
■ Zero Hours Contracts	13	■ Football: Foreign Nationals	24
		■ Treasure	24

■ Youth Services	25	■ Students: Fuels	41
DEFENCE	26	■ Teachers: Retirement	42
■ 77th Brigade	26	■ Vocational Education: Qualifications	43
■ 77th Brigade: Finance	26	ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO	43
■ Armed Forces' Pay Review Body: Public Appointments	27	■ Carbon Emissions	43
■ Armed Forces: Discharges	27	■ Carbon Emissions: Air Pollution	43
■ Armed Forces: Homosexuality	29	■ Disability: Energy	44
■ Defence: Satellite Communications	30	■ District Heating: Government Assistance	44
■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Supply Chains	30	■ Electric Vehicles	45
■ Hightown Barracks	30	■ Energy Bills Rebate	45
■ Military Bases: CCTV	31	■ Energy Intensive Industries	45
■ Ministry of Defence: Disability	31	■ Energy Price Guarantee	46
■ Ministry of Defence: TikTok	32	■ Energy: Government Assistance	46
■ Palace Barracks	33	■ Energy: Hospices	46
■ Pinnacle Group: Contracts	33	■ Energy: Local Government	47
■ RAF Aldergrove	33	■ Energy: Meters	47
■ Thiepval Barracks	34	■ Energy: Supermarkets	47
■ Ukraine: Defence Equipment	34	■ Fuels: Prices	48
■ Ukraine: Military Aid	35	■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Energy	48
EDUCATION	36	■ Housing: Insulation	49
■ Apprentices: Degrees	36	■ Hydrogen: Heating	49
■ Children in Care: Equality	36	■ Local Net Zero Forum	49
■ National Tutoring Programme	37	■ Warm Home Discount Scheme	50
■ Nature Conservation: Curriculum	38	■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Wirral West	50
■ Nature Conservation: Education	38	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	50
■ Out-of-School Education	39	■ Air Pollution	50
■ Pupils: Assessments	39	■ Air Pollution: Birmingham Airport	51
■ School Meals: Nutrition	39		
■ Special Educational Needs: Teachers	40		

■ Air Pollution: Gatwick Airport	51	■ Cycling and Walking	64
■ Air Pollution: Monitoring	52	■ Dental Health	65
■ Air Pollution: North East	52	■ Department of Health and Social Care: Disability	65
■ Air Pollution: Schools	53	■ Earwax: Medical Treatments	65
■ Air Pollution: Standards	53	■ Epidermolysis Bullosa: Health Services	65
■ Air Quality Grant Scheme	54	■ Health Services: Sign Language	66
■ Cats: Tagging	54	■ Hospices: Energy Bills Discount Scheme	67
■ Chemicals: Regulation	54	■ Hospitals: Discharges	67
■ Deposit Return Schemes: Impact Assessments	55	■ Immunosuppression: Coronavirus	67
■ Dogs: Tagging	55	■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control	68
■ Farms: Death and Industrial Accidents	56	■ Mental Health Services: Emergency Calls	69
■ Flood Control: Housing	56	■ Mental Health Services: Police Custody	69
■ Livestock Worrying	57	■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists	69
■ Local Government: Climate Change	57	■ Protective Clothing	70
■ Packaging: Recycling	59	■ Public Health: Finance	70
■ Water Supply	59	■ Schools: Mental Health Services	70
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	60	■ Social Services: Vacancies	71
■ Chemical Weapons Convention	60	HOME OFFICE	72
■ Hassan Farhan al-Maliki and Salman al-Odah	60	■ Asylum	72
■ New START Treaty	60	■ Asylum: Children	72
■ Nicaragua: Politics and Government	61	■ Asylum: Detainees	73
■ Peru: Politics and Government	61	■ Asylum: Legal Profession	74
■ Syria and Turkey: Earthquakes	62	■ Asylum: Stockport	74
■ Syria: Earthquakes	62	■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation	75
■ Venezuela: Elections	63		
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	63		
■ Air Pollution: Monitoring	63		
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	63		

■ Community Safety Partnerships	76	■ Housing: Construction	95
■ Crime: Romford	76	■ Levelling Up Fund	95
■ Dual Nationality	76	■ Local Plans	96
■ Extradition: USA	77	■ Members: Correspondence	96
■ Fire and Rescue Services: Inflation	79	■ Offices: Change of Use	97
■ Home Office: Aviation	80	■ Parish Councils: By-elections	97
■ Home Office: Disability	80	■ Parking: Codes of Practice	97
■ Immigration: Appeals	84	■ Refugees: Ukraine	98
■ London Fire Commissioner	84	■ Regional Planning and Development	98
■ Police: Urban Areas	84	NORTHERN IRELAND	99
■ Refugees: Afghanistan	85	■ Surgical Mesh Implants: Northern Ireland	99
■ Research, Information and Communications Unit	86	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY	100
■ Slavery	87	■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Prices	100
■ Visas: Foreign Investment in UK	87	■ Building Digital UK and UK Space Agency: Consultants	100
■ Visas: Graduates	88	■ Horizon Europe	101
■ Visas: Married People	88	■ Horizon Europe: Expenditure	102
JUSTICE	89	■ Horizon Europe: Universities	102
■ Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board	89	■ Members: Correspondence	103
■ Crown Court: Solihull	89	■ Science: EU Grants and Loans	103
■ Employment Tribunals Service	90	SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION	104
■ Prisoners: Employment and Pay	91	■ Elections: Proof of Identity	104
■ Prisoners: Police Custody	92	TRANSPORT	104
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	93	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	104
■ Affordable Housing: Construction	93	■ Avanti West Coast: Standards	104
■ Elections: Proof of Identity	94	■ Avanti West Coast: Travel Information	105
■ Evictions: Homelessness	94	■ Aviation	105
■ Freehold	95	■ Aviation Council	106

■ Aviation: Strikes	106	TREASURY	117
■ Blue Badge Scheme: Terminal Illnesses	107	■ Business: VAT	117
■ Buses: Driving	107	■ Car Allowances	117
■ Department for Transport: Aviation	108	■ High-risk Wealth Programme	117
■ Department for Transport: Disability	108	■ Medical Equipment: Energy	118
■ Driverless Vehicles	108	■ Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation	119
■ Driving: Eyesight	109	■ Treasury: Aviation	119
■ East Coast Main Line and West Coast Main Line: Passengers	110	WORK AND PENSIONS	119
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	110	■ Access to Work Scheme	119
■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries	110	■ Bereavement Benefits: Cohabitation	120
■ High Speed 2 Line	111	■ Bereavement Support Payment: Cohabitation	120
■ High Speed Two: Communication	111	■ Child Maintenance Service	121
■ Large Goods Vehicles: Standards	111	■ Children: Maintenance	122
■ Offshore Industry: Missing Persons	112	■ Citizens Advice: Contracts	124
■ Offshore Suppliers	112	■ Cost of Living Payments	124
■ Offshore Suppliers: Inspections	113	■ Cost of Living: Finance	125
■ Pedestrian Crossings	114	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Disability	126
■ Road Safety Investigation Branch	114	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Minimum Wage	129
■ Road Traffic Control: Police	114	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Publications	129
■ Roads: Accidents	114	■ Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit	129
■ Roads: Safety	115	■ Employment Schemes	130
■ TransPennine Express Rail Franchise	115	■ Employment: Age	130
■ Transport: Accidents	115	■ Flexible Support Fund: Universal Credit	130
■ Transport: Safety	116	■ Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981	131
		■ Social Security Benefits: Up-rating	131

■ Universal Credit	132	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	135
■ Universal Credit: Childcare	133	■ England Rare Diseases Action Plan 2023	135
■ Universal Credit: EU Nationals	133	JUSTICE	136
<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>134</b>	■ Consultation on a small payments scheme for the Mental Capacity Act 2005	136
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	134	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	138
■ Marine Protection Update	134	■ Consultation Update	138

**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

### BUSINESS AND TRADE

#### ■ **Beer and Gin: Exports**

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[147134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department is taking steps to help support and increase the export of locally produced beer and gin to overseas markets.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for Business & Trade provides bespoke export advice and support to our distilleries and breweries across the UK through our network of international trade advisers and dedicated sector resource in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The Department has a dedicated workplan of export promotion activities including a strong UK presence at tradeshow such as Prowein in Germany in March, educational webinars and inward buyer visits.

We work in close partnership with trade associations such as the Wine and Spirits Trade Association and the British Beer and Pub Association to help drinks exporters to capitalise on the enormous global demand for British food and drink whilst we work to open new markets for their products.

#### ■ **British Steel: Energy**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[151276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department is taking steps to help support British Steel in Scunthorpe with the cost of energy.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

On 23 February we announced the British Energy Supercharger – a package of decisive measures that will bring energy costs for energy intensive industries, including steel, in line with those charged across the world's major economies.

These measures build on the extensive backing already offered to British Steel and to the wider steel sector by the Government since 2013 to make their energy costs more competitive. We have also implemented the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and we will continue such energy support until 31 March 2024 through the Energy Bills Discount Scheme.

#### ■ **British Steel: Scunthorpe**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[151275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed closure of British Steel coking ovens in Scunthorpe on the UK's reliance on imported coke.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[151277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed closure of the British Steel coking ovens in Scunthorpe on the (a) supply chains, (b) employment levels and (c) competitiveness of the steel industry in the UK.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

If British Steel proceeds with the closure of its coke ovens:

- a) British Steel will make a commercial decision on their own supply chains. In 2022 the UK imported c. 1.4m tonnes of coke from a range of sources, including 1.1m tonnes from the four largest sources: Japan, Colombia, the USA and Canada. We do not have data to assess the impact on other supply chains;
- b) British Steel have announced this will lead to up to 260 job losses; and
- c) we have no evidence that the closure of the coking ovens would change the competitiveness of the steel industry in the UK.

#### ■ **Certification Officer: Reform**

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[146846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether his Department has plans to modernise the Certification Officer to help ensure that legal advice obtained by trade unions is communicated to their members.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Certification Officer is the regulator of trade unions and employer associations. The Government modernised the role of the Certification Officer recently by implementing in April last year the reforms under the Trade Union Act. This has given the Certification Officer greater investigatory powers, the power to impose financial penalties and the ability to raise a levy on trade unions and employer associations. The Government has no further plans to reform the role of the Certification Officer at this time.

#### ■ **Companies: Corporate Governance**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[149593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing the proposals of the Better Business Act campaign.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Better Business Act campaign makes a constructive proposal for a new legal duty on directors with regard to society and the environment, but the Government is not convinced that it is workable. Section 172 of the Companies Act already requires directors to have regard to the environment, employees, customers and suppliers, among other matters. Since 2019, directors of large companies have been required to make an annual statement describing how they have had regard to these matters.



## ■ Construction: Contracts

**Andrew Lewer:**

[\[148772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to his Department's publication entitled Retention payments in the construction industry consultation: summary of responses, published in February 2020, what progress he has made on that document's next steps, including on the policy options under consideration.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Government continues to work with the Construction Leadership Council to resolve the problems associated with cash retentions. Any policy solution must be a sustainable one that works for the industry and its clients, addressing both the need for surety and fair payment.

The Government is currently consulting on proposals on the inclusion of retention payments under the Reporting on Payment Practices and Performance Regulations 2017.

Other Council work includes supporting a pilot project with the Get It Right Initiative to reduce defects, and collaboration with the bodies responsible for construction contractual documentation to discourage the withholding of retentions.

## ■ Department for Business and Trade: Ministerial Boxes

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[141387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many ministerial red (a) boxes and (b) folders were in use by her Department as of 1 February bearing the inscription (i) Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (ii) Department for International Trade; and how much public money was spent on the procurement of those items.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

As of 1 February, there was one red box and fifteen folders in use by the Department bearing the inscription Department for International Trade. This was at a cost of £1,500 for the box and £5,760 for the folders with a total cost of £7,260. There were no boxes or folders in use bearing the inscription Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

## ■ Exports: Telephone Services

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[148619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2023 to Question 121033 on Trade Promotion, when she will publish the evidence on the Export Support Team's services' performance and satisfaction that the Department is now in the process of collecting.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Export Client Survey launched in 2018 and the findings for the 2018-2019 financial year have been published:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trade-export-client-survey-ecs>.

We intend to publish the subsequent Export Client Survey findings as per the Department's monitoring and evaluation strategy and in line with the Government Social Research protocol.

**■ Growth Hubs: Finance**

**Seema Malhotra:** [148620]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much core funding her Department plans to provide to Growth Hubs in each remaining year of the Spending Review period (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

No final decision has been made on the level of core funding for the network of 38 Growth Hubs across England after 31 March 2023. As with previous years, we will inform Growth Hubs' parent Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities at the earliest opportunity.

**■ Help to Grow Schemes**

**Seema Malhotra:** [148622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what has been the total expenditure on the Help To Grow: Digital scheme in financial years (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

**Seema Malhotra:** [148623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many businesses made use of the Help To Grow: Digital scheme during its lifespan.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Data on the Help to Grow: Digital scheme will be released in Spring 2023 after the scheme has fully closed.

**■ Home Ownership: Foreign Nationals**

**Matt Western:** [148700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what data her Department holds on the number of UK domestic residential properties owned by individual foreign nationals in (a) 2010 and (b) 2022; and what estimate her Department has made of the total value of that property in those years.

**Matt Western:** [148836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what data her Department holds on the number of UK domestic residential properties owned by individual foreign

registered businesses in (a) 2010 and (b) 2022; and what estimate her Department has made of the total value of that property in those years.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

HM Land Registry (HMLR) registers legal ownership, interests, mortgages and other secured loans against land and property in England and Wales. Land Registration is a devolved matter in Scotland and in Northern Ireland.

HMLR does not hold information on the nationality of individuals. While some individuals may provide non-UK correspondence addresses, this does not necessarily indicate nationality.

Published information on overseas companies that own property in England and Wales is accessible here: <https://use-land-property-data.service.gov.uk/datasets/ocod>.

■ **Industry: Northern Ireland**

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[151432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Press Release entitled Government action to supercharge competitiveness in key British industries and grow economy, published on 23 February 2023, what steps she is taking to help ensure equal support for businesses in Northern Ireland in the context of that announcement.

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[151433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Press Release entitled Government action to supercharge competitiveness in key British industries and grow economy, published on 23 February 2023, whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of those measures on the Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland.

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[151434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Press Release entitled Government action to supercharge competitiveness in key British industries and grow economy, published on 23 February 2023, what discussions her Department has had with its counterparts in Northern Ireland on the (a) design of and (b) inclusion of Northern Ireland businesses in that scheme.

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[151435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department had discussions with industry stakeholders in Northern Ireland before announcing the British Industry Supercharger.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

These measures relate to the GB electricity market. Northern Ireland is part of the separate, Single Irish Electricity Market and will therefore not benefit directly from this package. Officials continue to work closely with their counterparts in Northern Ireland.

## ■ Iron and Steel: Recycling

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[151273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of ArcelorMittal's acquisition of John Lawrie Metals Ltd in March 2022 on the level of scrap steel that will be diverted out of the UK.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK has an abundance of scrap steel, generating 11.3 million tonnes per year and recycling around 2.6 million tonnes domestically<sup>[1]</sup>. We do not expect the March 2022 commercial acquisition of John Lawrie Metals Ltd to have an impact on the availability of scrap steel in the UK.

[1] According to the Government-funded Scrap Steel Recycling report by the University of Warwick, of February 2021.

## ■ Postal Services

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[148644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) Royal Mail and (b) Ofcom on Royal Mail's review of customer service points.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Decisions on the closure of customer service points are an operational matter for Royal Mail, provided they meet Ofcom's regulatory requirement on Royal Mail, as the Designated Universal Service Provider, to provide access points for the universal service.

Whilst the Government has no role in Royal Mail's operational decisions, I understand that Royal Mail has completed the first stage of its review of customer service points and decided to maintain the current estate.

## ■ Small Businesses: Advisory Services

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[148621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she will publish the independent evaluation of the Peer Networks Programme reported in paragraph 111 of the Industrial Development Act 1982: Annual Report 2021 to 2022.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The independent evaluation of the Peer Networks Programme is in progress, and the final report will be published this summer.

## ■ Trade Agreements: Canada

**Richard Thomson:**

[\[148851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with (a) colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions and (b) negotiators on the

UK-Canada Free Trade Deal on any clauses that would end the freeze on State Pension payments to UK pensioners residing in Canada.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for Business and Trade and Department for Work and Pensions agree that social security arrangements are not a trade issue. Therefore, the UK will not be seeking any clauses to end the freeze on State Pension payments to UK pensioners residing in Canada in the UK-Canada Free Trade Agreement.

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to him by the Minister for Pensions on 10 February 2023, UIN: [141589](#) about HMG's social security relationship with Canada.

■ **Video Games: Exports**

**Matt Western:**

[\[148839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what grants and programmes exist to help video games studios export their games.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for Business and Trade, working with industry partners, delivers a trade promotion programme for UK video games firms at major international video games trade shows to support their exporting journey. An example of this support is the video games trade mission this department is taking to the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco in March 2023. We also deliver a dedicated campaign programme 'Made in the UK, Sold to the World' which encourages new exporters, including those from the video games sector, to pursue export opportunities. Video games firms can also access the Creative Industries Faculty of the Export Academy, which builds their export capability through a programme of online learning.

■ **Zero Hours Contracts**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the latest release of data entitled EMP17: People in employment on zero hours contracts, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the proportions of (a) 16-24 year olds and (b) 25-34 year olds in work who are on Zero Hour Contracts.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the latest data release entitled EMP17: People in employment on zero hours contracts, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of trends in the proportion of university students who are working in jobs with zero hours contracts.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to address levels of young people and students employed on zero hours contracts.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Zero-hours contracts remain an important part of the UK's flexible labour market, for both employers where there is not a constant demand for staff and for individuals who may need to balance work around other commitments such as childcare and study.

Individuals on zero hours contracts represent a very small proportion of the workforce – just over 3%. For this small group, a zero-hour contract may be the type of contract which works best for them, providing flexibility to balance work and study with 22% of people on zero-hour contracts are in full-time education compared with 3% of other people in employment.

The Government is supporting a Private Member's Bill which will introduce a new right for workers – especially those on zero hours contracts - to request a more predictable working pattern. The new right will allow a qualifying worker to make an application to change their existing working pattern if it lacks predictability in terms of the hours they are required to work, or if it is a fixed term contract of less than 12 months.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Disability**

**Chris Stephens:** [R] [\[150525\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps they have taken to operate a disability confident scheme for those seeking promotion in their Department; and how many and what proportion of those candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under the scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) promoted in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Chris Stephens:** [R] [\[151313\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Cabinet Office, as an employer, is an accredited member of the Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) and retains a level 3 position. This demonstrates the department has the ability to actively and effectively recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

As a DCS member, the Cabinet Office is committed to providing a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process, and putting in place reasonable and workplace adjustments wherever required.

We offer an interview to all disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the role they have applied for, demonstrating flexibility when assessing applicants so disabled people have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job for which they have applied.

Cabinet Office regularly reviews and challenges operating processes to ensure disability inclusion happens throughout the recruitment process and during all employees' periods of employment with the department.

In 2021-22, 174 candidates who declared a disability and applied under DCS on promotion were interviewed and 40 candidates received a provisional offer.

In 2021-22, 74 candidates who declared a disability and applied under DCS on a level transfer were interviewed and 40 candidates received a provisional offer.

### ■ **Civil Servants: Pay**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[146799\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of increasing the pay of civil servants.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Pay for grades below the Senior Civil Service is delegated to departments. Pay awards are made by individual departments, in consideration of their own priorities and affordability, and discussed with their trade unions.

The pay remit guidance is a cost control document and allows departments to seek further flexibility for a pay award above the headline range for pay awards, as demonstrated by pay deals in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Ministry of Justice in previous years.

It is important that pay awards for civil servants are affordable, as well as fair to both staff and the taxpayer. The pay remit guidance considers economic conditions while balancing the need for sustainable public finances. The 2023/24 guidance will be published this year.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[147055\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate has he made of the number of people who have died as a result of reactions to the covid-19 vaccine in each month since December 2020.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[147056\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have been recorded as dying due to complications caused by covid-19 vaccines in each month since December 2020.

**Justin Madders:**

**[147057]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many deaths have been recorded by the coronial system as relating to complications caused by the covid vaccine in each month since December 2020.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 17 February is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. [UKSA Response to 147055](#) [PQ147055\_147056\_147057 (1).pdf]

## ■ Local Resilience Forums

**Julian Knight:**

**[147033]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment has he made of the potential merits of placing Local Resilience Forums on a statutory footing.

**Dan Carden:**

**[147279]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of placing Local Resilience Forums on a statutory footing.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Government considered the status of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) as part of the Post Implementation Review of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) published in 2022.

Evidence collected through a public consultation, dedicated engagement with stakeholders and lessons from recent emergencies did not demonstrate a clear need for making LRFs a legal entity.

Legal status could conflict with the duties placed on Categorised responders (such as emergency services, local authorities and utilities) and undermine the existing arrangement set out in the Act.

The review recognised the need to strengthen Local Resilience Forums in England and committed in the UK Government Resilience Framework to working across three key pillars of reform - Leadership, Accountability, and Integration of resilience into the UK's levelling up mission.

## ■ Manchester United: Qatar

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[149435]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any officials, advisers or ministers from his Department have held discussions with representatives of (a) the Qatari government, (b) the consortium led by Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani or (c) Manchester United Football Club on that consortium's proposed takeover of that club.



**Jeremy Quin:**

Neither Cabinet Office Ministers nor Officials have held meetings with the Government of Qatar, the consortium led by Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, or Manchester United Football Club to discuss the takeover of the club.

This is a matter for the owners and potential purchasers to resolve, including meeting any relevant requirement of the league in which they compete.

**Members and Ministers: Conflict of Interests****Fleur Anderson:**[\[147355\]](#)

To ask Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what recent steps the Government is taking to prevent potential conflicts of interest that may result from Ministers and MPs being on the boards of private energy companies.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the Ministerial Code (Section 7 and Annex B) which can be found on gov.uk.

The conduct and interests of Members of Parliament who are not Ministers is a matter for the House, not the Government.

**Prime Ministers: Aviation****Matt Western:**[\[147148\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much each Prime Minister has spent on official travel via private jet since 2010.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The specific information requested is not centrally held and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. I would refer the Hon. Member to the previous Cabinet Office Annual Accounts and Reports that holds some information on departmental business travel since 2010.

**Public Duty Costs Allowance****Fleur Anderson:**[\[147397\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require that (a) former Prime Ministers must have served a minimum of 12 months in post before becoming eligible for the Public Duty Costs Allowance (PDCA), (b) the PDCA can only be claimed for 10 years and (c) claims for the PDCA are published.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Public Duty Costs Allowance was introduced to assist former Prime Ministers who are still active in public life. It has operated under successive administrations and continues to support Prime Ministers who formed previous governments.

It is not a form of salary; payments are made only to reimburse actual administrative costs incurred in the fulfilment of public duties. Generally, these costs can include

managing an office (staffing, payroll and administration); handling correspondence as a former Prime Minister; and support with visits and similar activities.

The allowance has an annual limit of £115,000, which has remained frozen since 2011. The amount received by each claimant is published annually in the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts.

The Government keeps the allowance under review.

## ■ Public Sector: Procurement

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[150421\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to increase the proportion of public procurement spending that goes to small and medium enterprises; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the single buyer agreement for public sector food on those businesses.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[150423\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether it is his policy for the Buying Better Foods framework to encourage SMES into the market; and if he will make a statement.

**Daniel Zeichner:** [\[150506\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to take steps to increase public procurement spend with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the single buyer agreement for public sector food on levels of spend with SMEs.

**Alex Burghart:**

We are increasing opportunities for SMEs in a variety of ways - from transparently publishing contract pipelines to simplifying bidding processes. The new procurement regime this Conservative government is putting in place with our new freedoms outside the European Union will create a simpler and significantly more transparent system that will further open up public procurement to SMEs so that they can compete for and win more public contracts.

The latest procurement figures for 2020/21 show that £19.3bn was paid to SMEs to help deliver vital public services. This figure is an increase of £3.7bn on the previous year and the highest since a Conservative led Government began recording the amount spent on SMEs in 2013, something not done under the last Labour government.

SMEs in the food supply chain have been consulted as part of supplier engagement activities for the proposed Buying Better Foods framework. Feedback from these activities shaped the procurement strategy for the framework agreement. SME producers will have increased opportunities to work with the public sector.

Customers will be able to request nominated local products (subject to the local supplier/producer meeting the minimum technical standards). These products would be consolidated into a single delivery with their food order. This is in addition to the

SME's already supplying the Wholesale market. This agreement will further support SMEs as KPIs will be established within the procurement evaluation to establish and monitor SME participation with action plans for growth; giving more data and transparency within the sector.

■ **Royal Mail Group: Vesa Equity Investment**

**Ian Lavery:**

[\[141432\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason his Department allowed Vesa Equity to increase its stake in Royal Mail group.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Secretary of State takes decisions under the National Security and Investment Act 2021 in a quasi-judicial capacity. The Investment Security Unit coordinates expertise from across Government so that the Secretary of State may make decisions based on the evidence. It would not be appropriate to comment on the detail of national security assessments.

■ **Veterans: Radiation Exposure**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[148669\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to support nuclear test veterans and their families.

**Johnny Mercer:**

This Government is committed to ensuring that veterans of the British nuclear testing programme are recognised and supported for their efforts in helping create our nuclear deterrent.

On 21 November 2022, the Government hosted an event at the National Memorial Arboretum to mark the contribution of Nuclear Test Veterans. This was attended by a number of service personnel, veterans and their families, and representatives from military charities. At the event, the Prime Minister announced a new medal to honour the significant contribution of veterans and civilian staff from across the Commonwealth.

Since then, the OVA has opened the £200,000 Nuclear Test Veteran Community Fund for applications from organisations to build community led programmes that help recognise and support nuclear test veterans and their families.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Arts**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[148730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what mechanisms her Department uses to assess the economic benefits that creative and cultural activities may

contribute to an area; and what steps her Department takes to support local authorities in developing and delivering creative and cultural strategies.

**Julia Lopez:**

Data collection plays an integral role in how the Department for Culture, Media and Sport assesses the economic contribution of its sectors to the UK economy. DCMS publishes official statistics (DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates) including data on Gross Value Added, employment and business demographics, which are available at regional levels. These data can be found on the DCMS website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates>

DCMS recognises the key role that local authorities play in developing, supporting, and delivering cultural and creative services and strategies within their local areas. As the Government's response to the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into Cultural Placemaking and the Levelling Up Agenda (published February 2023) sets out, we are supporting them to do this in a number of ways, including through DCMS's Cultural Compact initiative, jointly delivered with Arts Council England. DCMS's arm's-length bodies work closely with local government on strategic planning and delivery, including through five regional Area Towns Groups. These act as a co-ordinated 'single point of contact' for places in need of guidance on project development and delivery, and provide strategic planning for cultural placemaking and regeneration.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[148731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department take steps to help ensure equality of access to the creative and cultural assets of a location, including from people from lower socioeconomic groups.

**Julia Lopez:**

My Department is committed to broadening the accessibility of our cultural and heritage sites across the country to everyone regardless of their background, and Arts Council England's recent announcement of the 2023-26 National Portfolio – which sees a record number of organisations being funded in more parts of the country than ever before – will significantly improve access to creative and cultural assets.

This Portfolio will support 990 organisations across the whole of England. This is more than ever before, and in more places than ever before, with 276 organisations set to join the portfolio from all over the country. For the first time, Arts Council England collected information about socio-economic background during the application process, and this information can be viewed on the Arts Council website.

The Arts Council is committed to the development of an arts and cultural sector that is representative of modern society and in which there are no barriers to participation. To this end, Arts Councils across the UK are working together with the British Film Institute to launch a free, UK-wide arts access card by early 2024. This scheme was also announced in the new National Disability Strategy.

## ■ Arts: Finance

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[150433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the recent Arts Council England funding decisions for National Portfolio Organisations 2023-26, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of basing those decisions on the postcode of an organisation's office rather than the postcode of the work being delivered on levelling up outcomes.

**Julia Lopez:**

In line with its published guidance, Arts Council England considered both where organisations were based and where they were planning to deliver their activity in its assessments and decision-making for its 2023–6 Investment Programme, just as it did for previous rounds. This included consideration of the impact of investment on Priority Places, Levelling Up for Culture Places, places of historically low Arts Council investment, places of historically low cultural engagement, and the spread across the country and between rural areas, towns, and cities, as well as other balancing criteria unrelated to geography.

## ■ BBC: Sign Language

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[150566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department provides the BBC with ring-fenced funding for the provision of British Sign Language interpreters.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[150567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the BBC on how much that corporation has spent on the provision British Sign Language interpretation in each of the last 5 years.

**Julia Lopez:**

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the Government and spending decisions of the BBC are a matter for them.

As part of a digitally inclusive society, the Government believes that television content should be accessible for all UK audiences. As the independent broadcast regulator, Ofcom is responsible for holding broadcasters to account for the delivery of television access services which includes the provision of signing. Statutory targets are set by Ofcom which include five and ten year targets for licensed television services. Ofcom's Code on Television Access Services sets out these obligations and also provides further guidance that broadcasters should regularly monitor the quality of their access services, and ensure that scheduled access services are being provided correctly. This guidance must be observed by the BBC.

The BBC has reported on its Access Services in its [2021/22 Annual Report](#).

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Disability

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [\[150526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps they have taken to operate a disability confident scheme for those seeking promotion in their Department; and how many and what proportion of those candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under the scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) promoted in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Julia Lopez:**

The disability confident scheme (DCS) is applied to all advertised vacancies in DCMS. Any applicant with a disability is able to make an application under the scheme.

	2021 #	2021 %	2022 #	2022 %
Applicants applying on promotion under the DCS who were interviewed	39	10.89%	39	12.11%
Applicants applying on promotion under the DCS who were promoted/posted	6	5.26%	10	11.90%

To note on figures:

- Figures include vacancies that were advertised internally to DCMS, and across government - as this is the only way to capture those applying on promotion.
- Percentages are expressed as a proportion of the total number of applicants (i.e. those with a disability, those without a disability, and those who preferred not to disclose).

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [\[151314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme where (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Julia Lopez:**

DCMS does run a Disability Confident Scheme, which is applied to all advertised vacancies in the department. Any applicant with a disability is able to make an application under the scheme.

	2021 #	2021 %	2022 #	2022 %
Applicants applying on level transfer under the DCS who were interviewed	9	3.93%	35	14.23%
Applicants applying on level transfer under the DCS who were laterally transferred/posted	1	1.45%	5	7.58%

To note on figures:

- Figures include vacancies that were advertised internally to DCMS, and across government - as this is the only way to identify those applying on level transfer.
- Figures relate to DCMS pre recent Machinery of Government changes.
- Percentages are expressed as a proportion of the total number of applicants (i.e. those with a disability, those without a disability, and those who preferred not to disclose).

## ■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Northern Ireland

**Carla Lockhart:**

**[147448]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding her Department has provided for events held in Northern Ireland, in each of the last three years.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport funded the £120 million UK-wide festival, UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK. This comprised 10 major creative projects across the United Kingdom which delivered physical events at 107 locations as well as digital, broadcast and learning activities. Funding was allocated to the devolved administrations, including the Northern Ireland Executive, via the Barnett formula. While this funding was awarded as a block grant via the Barnett formula, the National Audit Office reported that the Northern Ireland Executive allocated £3.5 million to its strategic delivery body, which, in turn, commissioned the project.

One of the 10 UNBOXED projects, 'Our Place In Space', was commissioned by Belfast City Council on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, with stagings in Londonderry and Belfast. In addition to the Barnett allocation, 'Our Place In Space' received £120,000 (including VAT) for research and development during the 2020/21 financial year and a further £351,000 for R&D in the 2021/22 financial year. Additional investment by the UNBOXED Company enabled the popular sculpture trail to be mounted in Cambridge and Liverpool: ~£391,000 in the 2021/22 financial year and ~£1.72 million in the 2022/23 financial year.

Four additional UK-wide UNBOXED projects took place in Northern Ireland throughout 2022, although the Department does not hold a breakdown of how much it cost to stage those commissions in each location.

During the 2021/22 financial year, DCMS also provided £40,000 to Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council to support the development of its UK City of Culture 2025 bid, alongside seven other places across the UK longlisted for the competition.

## ■ **Flags: Pitcairn Islands**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[148579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of flying the Pitcairn Island flag in Parliament Square on Bounty Day.

**Stuart Andrew:**

There are no plans to fly the Pitcairn Islands flag in Parliament Square on Bounty Day.

We fly the flags of the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories including the Pitcairn Islands Flag on Parliament Square for Royal events and occasions such as Trooping of the Colour and for State Visits to London.

## ■ **Football: Foreign Nationals**

**Matt Western:** [\[148692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of male footballers playing in the Premier League hold foreign passports.

**Matt Western:** [\[148693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of football managers and coaches in the Premier League hold foreign passports.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government does not hold data on the passport status of sportspeople or sports coaches divided by sport or leagues.

## ■ **Treasure**

**Julian Knight:** [\[148664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure (a) the preservation of national treasures and (b) that a greater proportion of those treasures are placed on public display.

**Julia Lopez:**

We are committed not only to preserving national treasures but to making sure that the public have the greatest possible access to them. In support of that aim, we have



announced our plans to introduce a new class of treasure under the Treasure Act 1996, which will be the subject of debate in both Houses.

The current definition of treasure is limited mainly to finds made of precious metals: the proposed new class will extend that definition to base metal finds of outstanding historical, archaeological or cultural importance. This will mean that finds such as the Crosby Garrett Helmet will be offered to accredited museums to acquire, rather than being lost to private ownership. We are also introducing a revised Code of Practice which will make the treasure process clearer and easier to negotiate.

In addition, we have a number of statutory schemes like the UK's export licensing system for cultural objects which includes measures which seek to prevent national treasures from being permanently exported abroad by providing an opportunity for acquisition by a UK buyer committed to ensuring public access. Alongside that we also have the Cultural Gift and Acceptance in Lieu schemes – tax rebate schemes which seek to encourage people to donate national treasures to public institutions.

The care, protection, access and display of cultural property is the responsibility of museums. Programmes like the £4 million DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund help enable this, providing funding for museums to open up their galleries and collections more for public access as well as DCMS's £82 million Museum Estate and Development Fund, which is helping scores of regional museums to undertake essential maintenance and safeguard access to their buildings and collections.

## ■ Youth Services

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[148705]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a statutory youth service; and if she will take steps to establish that service.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As set out in section 507B of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to “secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient provision of educational and recreational leisure-time activities for young people”. Local authorities are required by section 507B(12) to have regard to the statutory guidance when exercising the functions in relation to the statutory duty.

DCMS is committed to completing the review of the guidance underpinning the Local Authority Statutory Duty for Youth Services, previously paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results will be published in due course.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[148706]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on joint (a) working and (b) funding for youth services to help tackle young people being caught up in crime.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[148732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with the Home Secretary on the potential of the creative and cultural sector in playing a role in diverting young people away from crime.

**Stuart Andrew:**

DCMS engages with the Home Office on the role universal youth services play in helping to reduce the risk factors associated with involvement in youth crime.

The government is investing over £500m in youth services over the next 3 years to deliver the National Youth Guarantee, which states that by 2025 every young person will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer.

Arts Council England's 2023-26 national portfolio will see a 20% increase in organisations delivering creative and cultural activity for children and young people. This includes organisations which focus on working with young people at risk of becoming involved in crime, and those in young offenders institutions.

In addition, the government has made a £200 million investment over 10 years via the Youth Endowment Fund, to test what works in preventing young people from becoming involved in violence.

## DEFENCE

### ■ 77th Brigade

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[148803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the 77th Brigade was formed and for what purpose.

**James Heappey:**

77th Brigade was established in 2015. It delivers information activities as part of broader military effects against hostile state actors and violent extremist organisations based outside the UK.

### ■ 77th Brigade: Finance

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[148804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding the British Army's 77th Brigade has received in each year since its formation.

**James Heappey:**

The Army does not delegate its financial budgets below Divisional level therefore it is not possible to determine how much funding 77th Brigade has been allocated since its formation in 2015.

## ■ Armed Forces' Pay Review Body: Public Appointments

**John Healey:** [\[150384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Minister responsible for appointing Members of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body is required to appoint the candidates recommended by the Assessment Panel.

**John Healey:** [\[150385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many vacancies there are on the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

**John Healey:** [\[150386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) applications were made and (b) interviews conducted for the role of (i) business member and (ii) public sector member on the Armed Forces Pay Review Body in 2022.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

All appointments to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body are conducted in accordance with the 2016 Public Appointments Governance Code and are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Paragraph 3.2 of the Code states that: *"Ministers should consider the advice of Advisory Assessment Panels but are not bound by their views. Ministers may therefore reject a panel's advice on the merit of candidates and choose to re-run a competition with a new panel. Ministers may choose to appoint someone who is not deemed "appointable" by the Advisory Assessment Panel. In this case, they must consult the Commissioner for Public Appointments in good time before a public announcement and will be required to justify their decision publicly."*

We are finalising the appointment of one member and currently holding a vacancy for a public sector member. For the Business member recruitment campaign, seventeen applications were received with six applicants invited to interview (one candidate withdrew before being interviewed). For the Public Sector member recruitment campaign, twenty-three applications were received with six applicants invited to interview.

## ■ Armed Forces: Discharges

**John Healey:** [\[151241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 12 March 2021 to Question 165547 on Armed Forces: Discharges, what those figures were in the period between 2019 and 2022.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The number of non-UK<sup>1</sup> nationality<sup>2</sup> personnel, who outflowed<sup>3</sup> from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2022, who served from 4 to 12 years<sup>4,5,6,7</sup> is shown in the table below. Information for the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 was provided in the previous PQ response but is included for ease of reference.

	4 YEARS	5 YEARS	6 YEARS	7 YEARS	8 YEARS	9 YEARS	10 YEARS	11 YEARS	12 YEARS
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020	10	10	40	30	20	20	30	20	20
1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021	~	~	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022	20	10	10	10	20	20	~	20	20

## Notes/Caveats:

1. The question has been interpreted as relating to removal of visa fees for non-UK Service Personnel to settle in the UK on discharge. Therefore, Non-UK Personnel are defined as Commonwealth UK Regular Personnel, Gurkhas and those Nepalese who have transferred out of the Brigade of Gurkhas to serve in the wider Armed Forces. This will differ from the Biannual Diversity Statistics, as it includes Gurkha personnel, and not the full list of Other Foreign Regulars.
2. Nationality on outflow as recorded on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. This is not where they were recruited from, nor does it filter for non-UK born personnel.
3. Outflow is derived by month-on-month comparisons of strength. These figures include outflow to specific populations. Personnel flowing from the Trained to the Untrained Strengths are not captured in this table.
4. Length of service (LoS) has been calculated using entry date. There are known problems with the entry date information extracted from Joint Personnel Administration (JPA). If personnel have transferred from Service to another service, have served under an alternative assignment type (e.g. Reserve Forces), are re-entrants or have transferred from Other Ranks to Officers, their entry date may correspond to any of these events. The resulting LoS may reflect their current period of service, include previous service, or it may be the time that has elapsed since they first joined the Armed Forces, irrespective of any break in service. It will

invariably include time spent on untrained strength. Length of Service (Years) is calculated as full years of service completed on outflow.

5. LoS on outflow can be affected by the relative size of intake in previous years, particularly in small populations.
6. Figures in this table have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in a "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent the systematic bias caused by always rounding numbers upwards. Figures between 1 and 5 inclusive are represented by '~' to prevent possible disclosure, and zero represented by "-".
7. This data is for the most recent financial years of 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2021 and 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

### ■ **Armed Forces: Homosexuality**

**Crispin Blunt:**

**[148521]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2023 to Question 125224 on Armed Forces: Homosexuality, whether his Department is aware of earlier destruction of relevant records.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Almost all police investigative records concerning gay and lesbian personnel before 2000 have been destroyed. Service Police investigative records are routinely and lawfully destroyed, in line with data protection legislation and Ministry of Defence (MOD) policy prescribing retention periods based on category of offence. Once records no longer have an investigative value there is no basis for retaining them, particularly as they contain sensitive personal information.

Our research into this topic indicates that relevant records were generally managed and retained in the same way as records of other offences, in line with data protection legislation and MOD policy at the time. Archived communications suggest the exceptions to this are:

- In 2000 the targeted removal of written warnings that had been placed on individual service records, where homosexuality was suspected but not proven, after the lifting of the ban on homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces made such warnings inapplicable.
- In the 1990s and 2000s, the collation and preservation of some records concerning homosexuality that was undertaken due to litigation against MOD.
- Some Royal Navy Special Investigation Branch paper investigative records from the 1990s escaped routine destruction by chance and still exist. MOD intend to use these records to improve their understanding of how gay and lesbian personnel were treated by the Armed Forces.
- The general destruction in 2010 and 2011 of most remaining investigative records, in line with MOD policy at the time and communicated by the Defence Police

Chiefs Forum. The destruction of investigative records did not include personnel service records, which remain intact.

■ **Defence: Satellite Communications**

**Julian Knight:** [\[148670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve military satellite communication systems.

**Alex Chalk:**

As set out in the Defence Space Strategy, the MOD is investing over £5 billion in our world-renowned SKYNET constellation of satellites, to provide high quality military satellite communications (SATCOM) for our Armed Forces.

The new SKYNET 6 constellation will increase Defence's ability to transfer large volumes of data globally, rapidly and securely, supporting connectivity across the whole force.

The Department is also investing in the next generation of land and maritime terminals which will provide a technically advanced capability out to 2040 and beyond, in order to meet current Defence needs and resilience against natural and hostile Electromagnetic (EM) threats.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Supply Chains**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[150408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89735 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Supply Chains, what his Department's definition is of majority of contract spend.

**Alex Chalk:**

The wording in the answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89735 should be given its ordinary English meaning.

■ **Hightown Barracks**

**John Healey:** [\[151249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Hightown Barracks.

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the right hon. Member to my response of 2 February 2023 to Question 136504.

**Attachments:**

1. [Hightown Barracks](#) [UIN 136504.docx]

## ■ Military Bases: CCTV

**John Healey:**

[151252]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department uses CCTV cameras manufactured by (a) Hikvision and (b) Dahua on the defence estate.

**Alex Chalk:**

We take the security of our personnel, systems and establishments very seriously and have a range of measures in place to ensure the integrity of our arrangements. These measures are kept under constant review and adjusted according to the threat. It is, however, long standing policy that we do not comment on the detail of those arrangements.

**John Healey:**

[151253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's policy is on using (a) CCTV cameras and (b) other electronic equipment provided by companies from (i) Russia and (ii) China on the defence estate.

**Alex Chalk:**

We take the security of our personnel, systems and establishments very seriously and have a range of measures in place to ensure the integrity of our arrangements. These measures are kept under constant review and adjusted according to the threat. It is, however, long standing policy that we do not comment on the detail of those arrangements.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Disability

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [150538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps they have taken to operate a disability confident scheme for those seeking promotion in their Department; and how many and what proportion of those candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under the scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) promoted in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [151325]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Disability Confident scheme was formally launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in November 2016. It is designed to give employers the skills, techniques and confidence they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff.

The scheme has three levels. To reach Level Three, Disability Confident Leader, an employer must run through a self-assessment of their disabled employment policies

and practices, put this self-assessment up for external validation, produce a plan for encouraging and supporting other employers to become Disability Confident, and undertake to use the Voluntary Reporting framework to publicly report on how they support their disabled staff. All of the main Government Departments are now signed up as Disability Confident Leaders including the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The data regarding the proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied to MOD under the scheme who were promoted or laterally transferred could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The table below details the number of staff invited to interview who declared themselves as having a disability and also applied under the Disability Confident Scheme (DCS). Only internal applicants have been included as they are the only staff who can be promoted or laterally transferred.

AREA INTERVIEWED	2021	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL (%)	2022	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL (%)
MOD (including SDA and DE&S)	433	26	439	27

#### Notes / Caveats -

- All data is taken from the feed from the recruitment systems used between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2022. The data will only include MOD applications that took place on recruitment systems between these dates.

#### ■ Ministry of Defence: TikTok

**John Healey:**

**[151254]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his Department's policy to prohibit (a) civilian and (b) armed forces personnel from using the TikTok app on their (i) work electronic devices and (ii) personal electronic devices.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not prohibit either civilian or military personnel from downloading the TikTok app on either work or personal electronic devices. However, MOD policy requires only official business to be conducted using MOD-managed devices. There are measures in place to ensure that any non-MOD apps downloaded on work devices cannot access MOD resources and vice versa.

The MOD's policy as set out in Joint Service Publication 740 ( [Acceptable Use Policy](#) for MOD's fixed and mobile Information and Communication Technology and services) states that apps must not be downloaded onto work devices unless there is a justified business purpose for doing so. This policy is reviewed regularly.

The MOD takes the human dimension of cyber-security very seriously at all levels, whether that be at home, on deployment or in the workplace. The MOD has an



ongoing cyber security awareness campaign, and regularly issues security reminders to all Units and staff.

## ■ Palace Barracks

**John Healey:** [151245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential of Palace Barracks is.

**Alex Chalk:**

Palace Barracks is 40.52 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of the site, as it has not been identified for disposal.

## ■ Pinnacle Group: Contracts

**Dan Jarvis:** [151293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the conditions on data (a) storage and (b) management specified in the Armed Forces Accommodation contract with Pinnacle Group Limited.

**Alex Chalk:**

A copy of MOD's Armed Forces Accommodation contract with Pinnacle Group Limited is already published on the GOV.UK website and can be accessed via the following link:

Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) - National Accommodation Management Services - Contracts Finder

Information specific to data requirements within the contract can be accessed via the following link. These requirements are primarily concerned with the protection of data, including personal data.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/Attachment/dbd9563d-6df1-4611-bda3-e68dee1e6792>.

## ■ RAF Aldergrove

**John Healey:** [151243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential of Aldergrove Barracks is.

**Alex Chalk:**

Aldergrove Barracks is 89.99 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of the site, as it has not been identified for disposal.

**■ Thiepval Barracks**

**John Healey:** [\[151247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, to ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of Thiepval Barracks is.

**Alex Chalk:**

Thiepval Barracks is 53.81 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of the site, as it has not been identified for disposal.

**■ Ukraine: Defence Equipment**

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[151422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of military equipment provided to Ukraine under British military aid since February 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The UK remains committed to supporting Ukraine to defend itself in response to Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion. The UK provided £2.4 billion in military support to Ukraine in 2022 – more than any country other than the United States - and has already committed to sustain that level of military support into 2023.

The UK's support to Ukraine has been and will remain steadfast. Including recently announced materiel, this includes:

- squadron of 14 Challenger 2 Tanks with armoured recovery and repair vehicles
- 20 AS90 self-propelled 155mm guns, battle ready, with a further 12 at varying states of readiness provided for replenishment and spares
- Several hundred armoured and protected vehicles
- 100,000 rounds of artillery ammunition in 2022, and 100,000 more planned for 2023
- More than 10,000 anti-tank weapons (including approx 5.5 thousand NLAW, plus Javelin, Brimstone, and other anti-tank weapons)
- Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and ammunition
- Six Stormer vehicles fitted with Starstreak launchers
- Thousands of surface to air missiles including Starstreak, and medium range air defence missiles (including AMRAAM missiles for use with the US NASAMS air defence system)
- Nearly three million rounds of small arms ammunition, 2,600 anti-structure munitions and 4.5 tonnes of plastic explosive
- Spares and supplies to refurbish up to a hundred Ukrainian tanks and infantry fighting vehicles
- Maritime Brimstone missiles

- More than 82,000 helmets, 12,000 sets of body armour, medical supplies and more than 5,000 night-vision devices
- More than 28 M109 155mm self-propelled guns
- More than 36 L119 105mm artillery guns and ammunition
- Over 2,000 uncrewed aerial systems (including hundreds of loitering aerial munitions)
- Six autonomous underwater mine-hunting vehicles
- Counter-battery radar systems
- Communications equipment
- Electronic warfare equipment
- Medical equipment
- 25,000 set of extreme cold weather clothing, 20,000 sleeping bags, 150 insulated tents
- Over 100 high power, industrial strength electricity generators
- More than 120 logistics vehicles
- A manoeuvre support package, including minefield breaching and bridging capabilities
- 125 anti-air guns
- Counter-drone capabilities
- Sea King helicopters

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[151420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total value is of military aid given to Ukraine by the UK since the Russian invasion of that country in February 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The UK continues to pursue all avenues to meet critical Ukrainian requirements at the quantities and pace required. The total value of military aid and operational activity committed in support of Ukraine by the UK since February 2022 is now £2.4 billion, which includes a further uplift from the Treasury Reserves for additional training requirements.

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[151421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of companies that have been awarded contracts as part of the UK's provision of military aid to Ukraine since the Russian invasion of that country in February 2022 and the amount of each contract.

**James Heappey:**

A proportion of the UK's military aid to Ukraine has been from existing stocks. Contracts planned with UK companies to replenish UK stockpiles will be published in the usual way once contractual negotiations are complete. However, a significant proportion of our lethal aid is procured overseas and for both operational and commercial reasons, the detail of these contracts will not be published.

**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[151423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has met with BAE Systems since February 2022 to discuss UK military aid to Ukraine.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I met with BAE a number of times in 2022. This has included one to one meetings, wider group meetings, such as the Defence Suppliers Forum, and site visits. Support to Ukraine was discussed on most of these occasions including how the Ministry of Defence was supporting Ukraine directly, and how we can ensure our own industrial resilience in addition.

**EDUCATION**■ **Apprentices: Degrees****Andrew Selous:**[\[903756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the uptake of degree apprenticeships.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department continues to see strong growth in degree-level apprenticeships with over 170,000 starts since 2014. We are making £8 million available to higher education providers to grow their degree apprenticeship provision and are partnering with UCAS, so young people can use their website to search and apply for these apprenticeships, alongside degrees.

■ **Children in Care: Equality****Chris Law:**[\[148598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many representatives from the care sector her Department engaged with ahead of the publication of the UK Government's response to the independent review of children's care.

**Chris Law:**[\[148681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of care sector representatives with which her Department consulted before publishing the response to the independent review of children's social care said that care experience should become a protected characteristic.

**Chris Law:**

[\[148682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page 196 of her Department's consultation entitled *Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation* published in February 2023, what recent discussions she has had with representatives from the care sector on the potential merits of listing care experience as a protected characteristic.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department has sought the views and advice from a range of stakeholders, including the National Implementation Board, local authorities, sector organisations and sector charities in developing 'Stable Homes: Built on Love', the government's implementation strategy and consultation for reforming children's social care. The department has also sought the views of care-experienced young people in developing our response. We will continue to engage during and after the consultation.

On the Care Experience chapter, as well as regular informal engagement with key stakeholders, the department held two roundtable discussions with around 20 organisations representing the care sector. The department participated in over 10 discussion sessions facilitated by charities with care-experienced children and young people. Some of these conversations included discussion of the review's recommendation to make care experience a protected characteristic. The department's engagement has not shown a consensus for making care experience a protected characteristic, as some fear it would add to the stigma and discrimination faced by care-experienced people.

To tackle stigma and discrimination, the department is prioritising extending strengthened corporate parenting responsibilities to all government departments and relevant public bodies. By amending the corporate parenting principles, we will ensure that policies and services that affect care-experienced young people take account of the challenges they face, remove barriers, and provide opportunities for them to thrive.

The department will hold a public consultation on the detail of these proposals in late 2023.

## ■ National Tutoring Programme

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[148847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to track the number of Pupil Premium pupils taking part in the National Tutoring Programme in this academic year.

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[148848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact on levels of participation in the National Tutoring Programme of changes in the subsidy rate in academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department established the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in summer 2020 to support disadvantaged pupils. Nearly 3 million tutoring courses have started through the programme so far, providing pupils across England with tutoring.

The Department's guidance for the NTP in 2022/23 sets out that schools are expected to prioritise their Pupil Premium cohort to receive tutoring, in line with the programme's objective of supporting disadvantaged pupils. Schools are best placed to understand the needs of their pupils and so may also consider offering tuition to other pupils, where appropriate.

The Department collects data from schools on the amount of tutoring they have provided for each pupil via the termly school census which has been made available on GOV.UK at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>.

**■ Nature Conservation: Curriculum****Justin Madders:****[148771]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to embed conservation and biodiversity issues within the school curriculum.

**Nick Gibb:**

Topics related to climate change and sustainability already feature in the National Curriculum.

A Natural History GCSE will be introduced in 2025. Pupils will explore organisms and environments in more depth, gain knowledge and practical experience of fieldwork and develop a greater understanding of conservation.

The National Education Nature Park will provide educational opportunities for pupils to take part in citizen science and biodiversity monitoring. It will increase opportunities for all children and young people to spend time in nature, learn more about it and become actively involved in the improvement of their local environment.

**■ Nature Conservation: Education****Justin Madders:****[148770]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to use the conservation education expertise of (a) Chester Zoo and (b) other zoos on the implementation of the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

**Nick Gibb:**

In developing the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, the Department engaged with a wide range of expert groups and organisations including Chester Zoo. The Department also sought the views of young people through a Youth Panel which included a member of the Chester Zoo Youth Board.

Chester Zoo are also working with Manchester Metropolitan University and the Natural History Museum in the delivery of the National Education Nature Park, which is one of the Department's key strategic initiatives.

## ■ Out-of-School Education

**Bridget Phillipson:**

[146923]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unregistered schools there have been in England in each of the last five years.

**Nick Gibb:**

Any school or college that provides full-time provision to five or more pupils of compulsory school age (or one or more pupils of compulsory school age who is 'looked after' or who has an Education, Health and Care plan) is required to register with the Secretary of State for Education. It is a criminal offence under Section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered. Ofsted publishes statistics on the number and outcomes of investigations carried out into unregistered schools. Statistics have been published online for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 August 2022 and can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/unregistered-schools-management-information>.

## ■ Pupils: Assessments

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[148597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of statutory educational assessments on the mental health of children undertaking those assessments in (a) primary and (b) secondary education.

**Claire Coutinho:**

At present, there are no statutory assessments in secondary education. Regarding statutory assessments in primary education, I refer the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles to the answer my right hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Schools, gave on 21 February 2023 to Question [141620](#).

## ■ School Meals: Nutrition

**Dean Russell:**

[148811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the nutritional value of meals served in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

The standards for school food are set out in the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014. These regulations are designed to ensure that schools provide pupils with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that pupils have the energy and nutrition they need throughout the school day.

The Department believes the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high quality and nutritious food, that builds healthy eating habits for life. The standards remain under review.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Teachers

**Catherine West:**

**[148703]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to (a) recruit and (b) retain more SEND specialist teachers for state-funded schools in England.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The number of teachers remains high, with over 465,500 full-time equivalent teachers working in state-funded schools across the country. This is over 24,000 more than in 2010.

The department's priority is to ensure that we continue to attract, retain, and develop highly skilled teachers. This is why we are taking action to improve teacher supply and quality by transforming the training and support we provide for teachers to attract more people to teaching and enable them to succeed.

All teachers are teachers of special education needs and disabilities (SEND). The department is committed to ensuring that all pupils can reach their potential and receive excellent support from their teachers.

The Teachers' Standards sets clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils. All trainees who achieve Qualified Teacher Status must demonstrate that they can adapt teaching to respond to the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

To support all teachers in meeting these standards, the department is implementing a golden thread of high-quality teacher training reforms, which begins with initial teacher training and continues throughout their career progression.

Once teachers qualify and are employed in schools, headteachers use their professional judgement to identify any further training, including specific specialisms, for individual staff that is relevant to them, the school, and its pupils.

To teach a class of pupils with sensory impairments, a teacher is required to hold the mandatory qualification in sensory impairment approved by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education. The department has developed a new approval process to determine providers of MQSIs from the start of the 2023/24 academic year. Our aim is to ensure a steady supply of teachers of children with visual, hearing, and multi-sensory impairments, in both specialist and mainstream settings.

The school teachers' pay and conditions document for 2022 sets out that an additional SEND allowance must be paid to teachers in a SEND post that requires a mandatory SEND qualification and involves teaching pupils with SEND. It is for schools to determine the specific amount, but this must be between £2,384 and £4,703 per annum.



## ■ Students: Fuels

**Angela Crawley:**

**[148721]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the rising cost of fuel on students in the UK.

**Robert Halfon:**

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

The department reviews the support provided to cover students' living costs on an annual basis.

We recognise the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have impacted students.

We have boosted our student premium by £15 million to help students who need extra support. This extra funding, now totalling £276 million, will complement the help universities are providing through their own bursary, scholarship and hardship support schemes. The department works with the Office for Students to ensure universities support students using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

The department has continued to increase maximum loans and grants each year with a 2.3% increase for the 2022/23 academic year and a further 2.8% increase for 2023/24.

Loans can support with students' living costs while attending university. the highest levels of support is targeted at students who need it the most, such as students from low-income families. Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the 2022/23 financial year has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 includes the provision which requires landlords to pass any benefits they receive from energy price support onto end users, as appropriate. Further details of the requirements under this Act are set out in the legislation.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from high energy bills this winter, including universities and private purpose-built student accommodation providers.

## ■ Teachers: Retirement

**Matt Western:**

**[148691]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers retired from (a) primary and (b) schools in Warwick and Leamington constituency in (i) 2012 and (ii) 2022.

**Nick Gibb:**

Information on the school workforce, including the national number of teachers leaving service due to retirement, is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The table below provides the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of qualified teachers retiring, and the retirement rate, from state-funded primary and secondary schools in the Warwick and Leamington constituency and in England, for 2012 and 2020 (the latest data available).

### **Full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified teacher retirees and retirement rate <sup>1</sup> from state-funded primary and secondary schools**

As at November 2012, 2020

		<b>WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON ENGLAND</b>			
		<b>Primary Secondary</b>		<b>Primary Secondary</b>	
2020/21 <sup>2</sup>	Retirees	1.0	1.6	1,851	1,802
	Retirement rate	0.3%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
2012/13	Retirees	4.2	8.9	5,405	5,955
	Retirement rate	1.4%	3.4%	2.7%	2.9%

Source: School Workforce Census

1: Retirement rate is the number of retirees divided by the total number of qualified teachers in post in November 2020 and 2012 respectively

2: For example, 2020/21 retirees are those who left service between November 2020 and November 2021.

Retirees are defined as teachers who were receiving their pension from the Teachers' Pensions Scheme (TPS) at or before the time that they left state-funded schools in England. Statistics on all leavers, including retirees, and those who left without immediately receiving their TPS pension, are available from the School Workforce in England publication here : <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/03b17741-eeb9-4fb2-94e1-08db08498a11>.

## ■ Vocational Education: Qualifications

**Stephen Hammond:**

[\[903752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the uptake of Higher Technical Qualifications.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department believes that increasing uptake in Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) is key to helping people climb the ladder of opportunity.

HTQs began teaching from September 2022, starting with Digital HTQs. 106 qualifications have now been approved as HTQs across Digital, Construction and Health and Science routes, available for teaching from September this year. All occupational routes are due to be rolled out by 2025 where relevant occupational standards are available.

To support more people studying HTQs:

- We are promoting HTQs as part of the communications and engagement campaigns for young people, adults and employers.
- We have extended student finance access for HTQs for September 2023. This will allow learners studying them part-time to access maintenance loans, as they can with degrees. This will help learners fit study around work and other commitments.
- We have announced investments of around £70 million to date to support the growth of high-quality higher technical education.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[148834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recommendations in the Independent Review of Net Zero, published on 13 January 2023, on the provisions in the Energy Bill.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is carefully considering the recommendations proposed within the Independent Review of Net Zero, including recommendations that may relate to the Energy Security Bill.

### ■ Carbon Emissions: Air Pollution

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[148829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he has taken to ensure the net zero strategy aligns with the air quality strategy.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the period leading up to the publication of the Net Zero Strategy, there were numerous cross-Government discussions, including on air quality, reflecting the contribution that every sector of the UK economy needs to make to climate change mitigation.

As set out in the Strategy, the Government will pursue options that leave the environment in a better state for the next generation by improving biodiversity, air quality, water quality, natural capital, and resilience to climate change where appropriate.

Air quality policy is led by DEFRA. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero continues to engage regularly with DEFRA on a range of issues relating to improving air quality.

**■ Disability: Energy****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[149562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of banning the forced installation of prepayment meters in households with someone with a disability.

**Graham Stuart:**

All suppliers have agreed to cease the forced installation of prepayment meters and the remote switching of smart meters to prepayment mode up to 31 March 2023.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to Ofgem to ask that it does more to ensure suppliers protect vulnerable consumers and that they revise their practices and make sure PPMs are being installed as a genuine last resort. Ofgem has also called for evidence on identification of vulnerabilities, PPM Safe and Reasonably Practicable rules and guidance, and processes in place for installing or switching customers to PPMs by 7 March.

**■ District Heating: Government Assistance****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[148735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what energy support will be available for heat network customers when the existing schemes come to an end in March 2023.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[148736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to announce details of the energy support for heat network customers which will replace existing schemes at the end of March 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

Domestic heat network customers currently receive support on their heating and hot water bills via the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. The Government is developing options to ensure these domestic consumers benefit from support in line with other domestic

users after April 2023. Further information on a successor scheme will be available soon.

## ■ Electric Vehicles

**David Simmonds:**

**[903801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of encouraging the use of electric vehicles.

**Andrew Bowie:**

I have been working closely with Cabinet colleagues to accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles, which will help us meet our climate change obligations alongside improving air quality and supporting economic growth.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate

**Catherine West:**

**[148701]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussion he has had with local authorities on unclaimed energy rebate vouchers for consumers on prepayment meters.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government published [data](#) on Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) prepayment meter voucher redemption at local authority and constituency level on 14 February 2023 .

I called the Mayors of Tees Valley, West Midlands, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester to ask them to use their local networks to encourage people to locate and redeem their EBSS vouchers and the Government has cascaded information via DLUHC to local authorities. The Mayor of London was unavailable to take a call.

I have also organised drop-in meetings with Hon. Members, and I am writing to them to ask them to take action via their constituency networks.

## ■ Energy Intensive Industries

**Simon Baynes:**

**[903804]**

What steps he is taking to support energy intensive industries with energy bills.

**Andrew Bowie:**

Secure and affordable energy is vital to all parts of our economy – especially key sectors like steel and chemicals.

Last week, we announced the British Industry Supercharger ensuring energy costs for our most energy intensive industries are in line with other major economies around the world. The measures will help deliver the affordable, reliable energy that these industries need to become greener, and secure jobs for the future.

**■ Energy Price Guarantee****Angela Crawley:** [\[903805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the increase in the level of the Energy Price Guarantee in April 2023 on households.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Energy Price Guarantee will continue to ensure all households pay less for their energy bills than they would have otherwise with no Government intervention.

The Government has also announced further support worth £26 billion in 2023-24, to help the most vulnerable households.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[903807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the rise in the Energy Price Guarantee in April 2023 on families.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Energy Price Guarantee will continue to ensure all households pay less for their energy bills than they would have otherwise with no Government intervention.

The Government has also announced further support worth £26 billion in 2023-24, to help the most vulnerable households.

**■ Energy: Government Assistance****Navendu Mishra:** [\[148819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential benefits of targeted energy support for families that (a) run lifesaving medical equipment and (b) have other extra energy costs due to disability and care needs.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024, including options such as social tariffs, as part of wider retail market reforms.

The Government is assessing evidence and options and discussing this with stakeholders. As part of this work, the Government is working with disability organisations, considering the costs for disabled people including those with medical equipment and assessing the need for support for disabled people including those using medical equipment in the home .

**■ Energy: Hospices****Sarah Olney:** [\[148737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support hospices with the cost of energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Putney on 27 February to Question [147486](#).

**Energy: Local Government****Alexander Stafford:**[\[148830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing statutory provisions on local area energy planning.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government recognises the potential merits of local energy plans, however it is vital that any approach endorsed by government is considered carefully to ensure it is deliverable, cost-effective and aligned with wider policy.

The Government is considering the role of local energy plans, working closely with Ofgem as part of its ongoing governance review into local energy institutions and with other key stakeholders including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and UK Research and Innovation.

**Energy: Meters****Catherine West:**[\[148702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent discussions he has had with energy providers on unclaimed energy rebate vouchers for consumers on prepayment meters.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 4 December, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to electricity suppliers reiterating the importance of ensuring traditional prepayment meter customers receive their vouchers with prompt service and accurate information from supplier call centres. Data for the first 4 months of the scheme indicates that 98% of vouchers were dispatched by suppliers.

I chaired a roundtable on 7 December 2022 with electricity suppliers serving traditional prepayment customers to emphasise the importance of increasing their efforts to improve voucher redemption rates. I met them again on 25 January 2023, to discuss traditional prepayment meters where I reiterated the importance of delivering the EBSS support to all households.

**Energy: Supermarkets****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[148825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with supermarkets on taking steps to install doors on their chillers.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy related Products Framework identified commercial refrigeration as an area where energy efficiency could be improved. The Government is developing its understanding of the barriers to uptake and potential enablers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-related-products-policy-framework>.

The Government has recently funded a research project to support the refrigeration industry on its journey to net zero. Supermarkets are one of the six end use sectors in this study and a number of major retailers are involved. Investigation of the science, impact and benefits of fitting doors to retail display cabinets will be one of the technologies evaluated as part of this study.

**Fuels: Prices****Angela Crawley:****[148720]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to alleviate the impacts of the rising cost of fuel on low income households.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has set up a number of Energy Affordability schemes to support vulnerable people with the cost of their energy bills during the cold weather. The Energy Price Guarantee will save a typical household in Great Britain £900 this Winter. The Energy Bills Support Scheme provided households with £400 non-repayable Government discount paid in instalments to UK households from October 2022 to March 2023. Households using alternative fuels will be also entitled to a £200 Alternative Fuel Payment.

This is in addition to the cost-of-living support package announced in May 2022 of

- £650 Cost of Living Payment for those on means tested benefits;
- £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment for pensioners, households across the UK to be paid alongside the Winter Fuel Payment;
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment.

**Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Energy****Kevin Foster:****[903803]**

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on energy costs for the hospitality and tourism sectors.

**Amanda Solloway:**

I would like to thank my hon Friend the Member for Torbay for his tireless work to support the hospitality and tourism sector across his constituency.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme has provided much needed support with high energy costs over the winter. We continue to work closely with the sector, including through



the newly-established Hospitality Sector Council and across Government to ensure a successful future for these important industries.

## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Alexander Stafford:**

[148831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to accelerate home insulation measures ahead of winter 2023-24.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is investing £6.6 billion over this parliament on decarbonising heat and energy efficiency measures and intends to launch the ECO+ scheme around spring 2023 running until March 2026 to provide further support for households to reduce their energy bills.

In 2022 a zero-rate of VAT was introduced on energy efficiency measures, and the Government launched a digitally led service 'find ways to save energy in your home' (<https://www.gov.uk/improve-energy-efficiency>). The site provides guidance helping consumers make their homes greener and cheaper to run, supported by a call centre for assistance.

## ■ Hydrogen: Heating

**Justin Madders:**

[148764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of hydrogen village trials.

**Graham Stuart:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 16th January 2023 to Question [117986](#).

## ■ Local Net Zero Forum

**Alexander Stafford:**

[148827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he has taken to facilitate meetings with the net zero local forum.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[148828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make the local net zero forum a statutory body.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[148832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the role of local government in achieving the Government's net zero target.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[148833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of (a) local and (b) central government frameworks for achieving the Government's net zero targets.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government recognises that local authorities can, and do, play an essential role in driving local climate action, with significant influence in many of the national priorities across energy, housing, and transport, which will be needed to achieve net zero. The Net Zero Strategy sets out our commitments to enable local areas to deliver net zero.

The Local Net Zero Forum has met three times at official level and held a ministerial level meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February. There are no plans to make the Forum a statutory body.

**■ Warm Home Discount Scheme****Margaret Greenwood:**[\[150514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will extend the deadline to claim for this year's Warm Home Discount scheme beyond 28 February 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

The end of the scheme year, as set in regulation, is 31 March. As participating energy suppliers have 30 days to provide the rebates, the deadline for making a claim this scheme year is 28 February to ensure that almost all rebates are paid before the end of the scheme year.

This deadline was communicated in the over three and a half million letters that the Government sent to eligible and potentially eligible households between November and mid-January.

**■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Wirral West****Margaret Greenwood:**[\[150513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of households in Wirral West constituency that (a) are eligible to receive payments under the Warm Home Discount Scheme in 2023 and (b) were eligible to receive those payments in 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not hold constituency-level data on eligibility for Warm Home Discount rebates in previous years or this scheme year. More precise figures on eligibility for 2022/23 will only be available after the scheme year has ended after March.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Air Pollution****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[149545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to reduce air pollution.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The action we are taking to continue improving air quality is set out in our recently published Environmental Improvement Plan.

**■ Air Pollution: Birmingham Airport****Ruth Jones:****[149648]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the level of air pollution in and around Birmingham Airport.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra assesses air quality across the whole of the UK on an annual basis, including areas around Birmingham Airport. The latest assessment can be found here:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/>

Defra funds a national network of monitoring stations for the assessment of air quality, the closest to Birmingham Airport being “Birmingham Acocks Green”. There is one locally managed air quality monitoring station located within Birmingham airport. Defra makes this data available in near real time on the UK Air website.

Defra’s Pollution Climate Mapping model estimates concentrations of air pollutants at 1km<sup>2</sup> grid squares across the UK. An interactive map to display these concentrations can be found here:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/gis-mapping/>

**■ Air Pollution: Gatwick Airport****Ruth Jones:****[149647]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the level of air pollution in and around Gatwick Airport.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra assesses air quality across the whole of the UK on an annual basis, including areas around Gatwick Airport. The latest assessment can be found here:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/>

Defra funds a national network of monitoring stations for the assessment of air quality, the closest to Gatwick Airport being located in Horley. Defra’s Pollution Climate Mapping model estimates concentrations of air pollutants at 1km<sup>2</sup> grid squares across the UK. An interactive map to display these concentrations can be found through the following URL:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/gis-mapping/>

**■ Air Pollution: Monitoring****Ruth Jones:** [\[149558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much was allocated to local authorities for (a) buying and (b) maintaining air pollution monitoring equipment in each of the last 5 years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

64 local authorities are being supported by a fund of £883 million from Government specifically to develop and implement measures to address their NO2 exceedances in the shortest possible time. As part of this programme, local authorities are required to evaluate the impact of Local Plan measures, including maintaining or expanding air quality monitors where required.

Defra provides funding to English councils through the Air Quality Grant to help them develop and implement locally targeted measures. This year £10.7m in funding was awarded to 44 English local authorities, some of which will be used by local authorities to purchase monitoring equipment.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[149559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department plans to allocate to local authorities for (a) buying and (b) maintaining air pollution monitoring equipment in (a) 2022-23 and (b) 2023-24.

**Rebecca Pow:**

64 local authorities are being supported by a fund of £883 million from government specifically to develop and implement measures to address their NO2 exceedances in the shortest possible time. As part of this programme, local authorities are required to evaluate the impact of Local Plan measures, including maintaining or expanding air quality monitors where required.

Defra provides funding to English councils through the Air Quality Grant to help them develop and implement locally targeted measures. This year £10.7m in funding was awarded to 44 English local authorities some of which will be used by local authorities to purchase monitoring equipment. The budget available for the next round of funding will be announced in summer 2023.

**■ Air Pollution: North East****Ruth Jones:** [\[150627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on improving air quality in North East England in each of the last five years.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[150628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on improving air quality in North West England in each of the last five years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on improving air quality in East England in each of the last five years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on improving air quality in South East England in each of the last five years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

A wide and diverse range of complex policies affect air quality. Additionally, owing to the transboundary nature of air pollution, government is taking action not just locally, but also nationally and internationally. Due to these complexities, it is not possible to disaggregate air quality spending at a regional level.

#### ■ **Air Pollution: Schools**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[149554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an estimate of the number of schools in the West Midlands in areas with high levels of toxic air.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Local authorities have a duty to monitor and assess air quality and to take action to reduce pollution where local air quality objectives are breached. The positioning of monitors is expected to be in line with national and local priorities, which may include schools and other locations where there are more vulnerable populations.

#### ■ **Air Pollution: Standards**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[149650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Local Government Association on support needed by local government to help improve air quality.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra ministers and officials continue to engage with local authority representatives, including the Local Government Association, on the role of local authorities in improving air quality.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[149654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to help improve indoor air quality.

**Rebecca Pow:**

There is ongoing collaborative work across Government on indoor air quality. Overall coordination of this is being led by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

## ■ Air Quality Grant Scheme

**Alex Sobel:** [\[149601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of increasing the air quality grant for local authorities in the spring budget.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra remains committed to providing support for local authorities to tackle air pollution through the air quality grant. Since 2018 we have awarded over £35 million to a range of locally targeted projects. This includes £10.7 million in funding awarded to 44 local authorities this year.

The value of funding committed to the grant is reviewed annually. The budget available for the next round of funding will be announced in summer 2023.

## ■ Cats: Tagging

**Dean Russell:** [\[148813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made on introducing compulsory cat microchipping.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We plan to lay regulations soon which will bring compulsory cat microchipping into force in England. Once in force, cat keepers will have 12 months to comply with the new requirements.

## ■ Chemicals: Regulation

**Alex Sobel:** [\[150614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the commitment of the European Commission and European Chemicals Agency to develop a roadmap toward full replacement of animal testing, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that UK chemicals regulation (a) remains competitive and (b) is at the forefront of scientific development.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The UK has been at the forefront of opposing animal tests where alternative approaches could be used. We are determined that there should be no need for any additional animal testing for a chemical that has already been registered under UK REACH, unless it is subject to further evaluation that shows the registration dossier is inadequate or there are still concerns about the hazards and risks of the chemical, especially to human health.

The UK is supporting work to develop New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) which can provide information on chemical hazards and risk assessment. NAMs can provide information on chemical hazard and risk assessment without the use of protected animals. The UK is already, and will continue to be, a strong contributor to NAMs development at an international level. It contributes, for example, to the

development of non-animal alternatives for chemical testing through collaborative research programmes and work at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which develops internationally standardised tools and guidance to support companies and regulators in the use of non-animal methods.

Defra is working with others across Government on the use of non-animal methods into chemicals and wider risk assessment where they are equal to or offer improvements to accuracy, speed and efficiency. Our approach to regulation aligns with this direction of travel; for example REACH contains the last resort principle, which means that an animal study can only be carried out once a company has exhausted other ways of assessing the chemical's hazard.

We are developing a cross-government Chemicals Strategy to frame the work we are doing across chemicals and put us on a path for improved chemicals management. It will set out our priorities and principles for taking regulatory action to protect human health and the environment. We are aiming to publish the Chemicals Strategy in 2023.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Chemical Business Association on the effectiveness of chemical regulation in the UK.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra maintains a regular dialogue with chemical industry trade associations (including the Chemical Business Association) and other interested stakeholders about chemical regulation in the UK.

## ■ **Deposit Return Schemes: Impact Assessments**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when her Department will publish the Deposit Return Scheme Impact Assessment.

**Rebecca Pow:**

DEFRA published the first impact assessment on DRS in 2019, and a subsequent update to the consultation analysis with a further iteration to the consultation impact assessment was published in 2021. A Final Impact Assessment will be published alongside the laying of the Deposit Return Scheme statutory instrument in parliament.

## ■ **Dogs: Tagging**

**Dean Russell:**

[\[148812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made on ensuring all dogs are microchipped.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Under the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015, it is an offence to not microchip a dog. Around 90% of dogs in the UK are now microchipped. The

Government works with stakeholders to remind the public of the legal requirement and the benefits of microchipping.

## ■ Farms: Death and Industrial Accidents

**Mark Pritchard:**

[148565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking with the Health and Safety Executive to reduce (a) farm deaths and (b) farm-related work accidents.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has responsibility for the regulation of health and safety standards on Great Britain's farms. Agriculture has the highest rates of injury and ill health of any industry sector and the HSE is working with key stakeholders in the industry to change behaviours in order to improve the management of risks on farms. The HSE's website - [Agriculture health and safety](#) - provides essential information and guidance on health and safety in agriculture. The industry, via the Farm Safety Partnership [Farm Safety Foundation / Yellow Wellies - YellowWellies.org](#), is also a key partner in the HSE's Working Minds campaign and supporting farmers to manage stress and mental wellbeing.

Defra works with the HSE to ensure that farmer feedback informs the HSE's work.

## ■ Flood Control: Housing

**Rachael Maskell:**

[151333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an estimate of the number of properties that would benefit from greater investment in in-home flooding resistance measures.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Within the Government's current £5.2 billion investment programme there are around 150 property flood resilience (PFR) schemes under development, which will better protect over 4,000 homes at very significant risk of flooding.

Using evidence from the investment programme, the Environment Agency will be developing Long-Term Investment Scenarios to forecast the optimal level of investment in PFR.

Flood-Re's Build Back Better scheme, developed with the Government, allows people, through participating insurers, to claim up to £10,000 for flood resilient repair over and above the cost of work to repair damage caused by a flood. Following its introduction in April 2022, the Build Back Better scheme is now supported by two-thirds of the UK property insurance market.



## ■ Livestock Worrying

**Crispin Blunt:**

[\[149386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the finding in research by NFU Mutual, published on 7 February 2023, that 39 per cent of dog owners surveyed stated that their dog does not always respond to their command to return; if she will take steps to increase the number of dogs receiving training to prevent sheep worrying; and whether her Department has conducted research on the potential impact of such training on the number of dog attacks on sheep.

**Mark Spencer:**

In December 2021, Defra published research in collaboration with Middlesex University investigating measures to reduce dog attacks and promote responsible dog ownership. In response to this research, we have established a Responsible Dog Ownership working group involving police, local authorities and animal welfare organisations which is considering the report's recommendations, including those relating to dog training. This research did not specifically address the impact of training on the number of dog attacks on sheep.

Currently it is an offence for a person to allow their dog to chase or attack livestock on any agricultural land – that includes where a dog is at large in a field or enclosure in which there are sheep.

The Government maintains that it is best practice to keep a dog on a lead around livestock. The Countryside Code advises dog walkers to always check local signs as there are situations where this is already a legal requirement for all or part of the year.

## ■ Local Government: Climate Change

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[147255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential financial risk to local authorities from climate change-related (a) weather and (b) temperature-related incidents in summer 2023.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[147280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential financial risk to local authorities from climate change-related weather and temperature incidents in summer 2023.

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[147331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential financial risk to local authorities from climate change-related (a) weather and (b) temperature-related incidents in summer 2023.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government published the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) in January 2022 which included findings from the 'Monetary Valuation of Risks and Opportunities in CCRA3' report which provides a synthesis of existing evidence estimating the economic costs of climate impacts. The CCRA informs decisions taken across the country to adapt to climate change impacts, both for central and local government.

Defra, alongside DLUHC, continue to work with local government partners to better understand climate impacts at a local level and to support their plans to deliver greater climate resilience.

Departments across Government worked to respond to heatwave of 2022, including as part of the UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) Heatwave Plan for England. What we have learned from these events will form a key part of the underpinning evidence for the next CCRA, the development of the UKHSA Single Adverse Weather and Health Plan, and the UK's third National Adaptation Programme which is due for publication this year.

**Alexander Stafford:**[\[147256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take steps to ringfence funding for local authorities to help manage climate-related incidents in summer 2023.

**Dan Carden:**[\[147281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take steps to ringfence funding for local authorities to help manage climate-related incidents in summer 2023.

**Kate Osamor:**[\[147332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to take steps to ringfence funding for local authorities to help manage climate-related incidents in summer 2023.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 makes available up to £59.7 billion for local government in England, an increase in Core Spending Power of up to £5.1 billion or 9.4% in cash terms on 2022/23.

The majority of the funding is un-ringfenced in recognition of local authorities being best placed to understand local priorities.

To assess the amount of funding required for local government ahead of fiscal events, we estimate the additional resource required to fund the expenditure needs of local authorities. Government uses a range of forecasts and indices to estimate demographic and unit cost pressures facing local government. We ensure the assumptions underlying our modelling are robust by holding in-depth financial

conversations with local authorities and regular conversations with treasurer societies.

## ■ Packaging: Recycling

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when her Department will publish details on the fees obligated businesses will have to pay under packaging Extended Producer Responsibility from April 2024.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Large organisations, who will pay disposal fees to cover local authority packaging waste management costs, will be informed of their fee once regulatory checks have been completed on all organisations from the second six-monthly data submission. The deadline for this submission is 1 April 2024, which will allow three months for organisations to collate and submit their July – December 2023 data. We are aiming to provide producers with illustrative base fees at the earliest opportunity. The estimates will be published for information only, and based on the best evidence available at this time, but should not be used for the purpose of business planning. We also intend to produce an updated estimate of fees by the end of 2023, following the first six-monthly data submission, the deadline for which is 1 October 2023.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[150635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representation obligated businesses will have in the establishment and operation of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme Administrator.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Scheme Administrator for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging is being designed to ensure that Obligated Producers will have representation in multiple boards and forums that will provide the governance framework within which the Scheme Administrator will operate. This will ensure that there is fair and appropriate stakeholder input into key decisions on how the Scheme Administrator is run.

## ■ Water Supply

**Matt Western:**

[\[148689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of fresh water depletion from England's aquifers (a) in 2022 and (b) the last ten years.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency (EA) undertakes an assessment of groundwater resources as part of the six year cycle of River Basin Management Planning process. Groundwater bodies need to meet the four quantitative tests that aim to protect surface water flows, groundwater levels, spring discharges and water quality. The assessment also includes a groundwater balance with consideration to amount of recharge, how much is needed to support rivers and the impact from groundwater

abstraction. The EA has been assessing groundwater bodies in this way since 2009 and the last reported assessment was carried out in 2019.

Assessment shows groundwater abstraction in 73% of groundwater bodies is sustainable and there is enough water to protect the environment, providing good support to fish and other aquatic life.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Chemical Weapons Convention

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[151258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has for the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention..

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK will use the upcoming Fifth Review Conference to promote our vision for the future of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the role it plays in deterring and responding to the use of chemical weapons. We believe that the OPCW plays an essential role in preventing the use of chemical weapons, promoting accountability and building capacity to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are underlining to other states parties our support for these core principles and our determination to uphold the international ban on chemical weapons use.

### ■ Hassan Farhan al-Maliki and Salman al-Odah

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[148633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of the imprisonment of Hassan al-Maliki and Salman al-Oudah.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office human rights priority country and we are following these cases. We raise a range of human rights issues, including the use of the death penalty and individual detentions, with the Saudi authorities at all levels, including most recently during Lord Ahmad's visit to the Kingdom on 15 February.

### ■ New START Treaty

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[151259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart on Russia's announced suspension of participation in the New START Treaty.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK has long valued New START for its contribution to strategic stability, transparency and building trust. Russia's unilateral suspension undermines this. We have been, and will remain, in close contact with the US to discuss Russia's withdrawal from New START and its implications. We have expressed at NATO our disappointment in this decision and urge Russia to immediately return to full compliance of the Treaty and to engage with the US constructively.

**Nicaragua: Politics and Government****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[151256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that Nicaraguan courts have removed the citizenship of almost 100 critics of the Ortega regime.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

While we welcome the release of 222 prisoners in February from Nicaraguan jails, the decision to expel these individuals from Nicaragua and to strip them of their Nicaraguan nationality is a further step by the Nicaraguan Government to silence critics of the ongoing deterioration of human rights in Nicaragua. We continue to call for the release of all other political prisoners in Nicaragua and will continue to also consider how, with partners, we maintain pressure on the regime and urge it to comply with international human rights law and respect human rights.

**Peru: Politics and Government****David Mundell:**[\[148554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recent protests in Peru.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We are closely monitoring political developments and public protests in Peru, and the implications of these developments for our work in the region. We continue to work with the Peruvian Government across a broad range of shared priorities including infrastructure, trade, security, the environment and values. We have made clear the UK's support for the Peruvian Government, the constitutional process and Peruvian democracy.

**David Mundell:**[\[148555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the government of Peru on the use of force during recent protests in Peru.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary discussed developments in Peru during a call with Peru's Foreign Minister on 21 February. Minister Rutley spoke with the Peruvian Vice Foreign Minister on 22 February 2023. Our Embassy in Lima has regular discussions

with the Peruvian Government about the situation, including reports of abuses and the deaths of protestors that have occurred since the change of government in December, highlighting the need to protect lives and for greater transparency in ensuring respect for fundamental rights.

### ■ Syria and Turkey: Earthquakes

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[149637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) financial aid and (b) rescue equipment to regions affected by the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK responded immediately to provide life-saving support to Turkey and Syria. In Turkey, a UK International Search and Rescue team arrived in Gaziantep on 7 February and commenced operations within the critical 72-hour rescue window. From 14 February, we deployed a world-class UK medical team, field clinic and field hospital to Turkey, which continues to treat patients. In Syria, the UK-aid-funded White Helmets mobilised a major search and rescue effort. We have dispatched thousands of vital items including tents and blankets to Turkey and Syria. The Disasters Emergency Committee appeal, now exceeding £93 million, includes £5 million of the UK Aid Match. The UK has committed a significant package of aid, totalling over £43 million to date.

### ■ Syria: Earthquakes

**Julian Knight:**

[\[147040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department has provided to support the response to the earthquakes in north-west Syria.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK responded immediately to provide life-saving support to people in Syria. On 7 February Lord Ahmad spoke with the UK funded White Helmets, who mobilised a major search-and-rescue effort in north west Syria and confirmed the UK had committed an additional £4.3 million to support their operations. Also, UK contributions to the UN's Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund ensured pre-positioned supplies, including food, could be received immediately by those in need. A further humanitarian package, including over 1400 tents and 17000 blankets have been distributed into Syria to provide protection in the freezing winter conditions in north west Syria. We also welcome the UN brokered agreement to open up additional border crossings into the north west to support the delivery of aid to those who need.

## ■ Venezuela: Elections

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[151257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Venezuelan counterpart on election observers at the 2024 Presidential Election in that country.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK Government does not recognise the Maduro regime. Our key priority is a peaceful resolution to the current crisis in Venezuela, where multiple crises are afflicting its people. A democratic transition through free and fair presidential elections, held in accordance with international democratic standards, is essential to help to bring an end to the multiple crises afflicting the Venezuelan people.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

## ■ Air Pollution: Monitoring

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[151329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to monitor the air quality for people with a diagnosed condition that can be affected by air pollution in the context of utilising new digital health technology.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department and UK Health Security Agency are working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on a comprehensive review of how we communicate air quality information to ensure members of the public, and vulnerable groups in particular, have what they need to protect themselves and also understand their own impact on air quality.

The Government has also invested over £2 million in projects to look at the performance of low-cost sensor technologies, including practical trials. This work lays foundations for the dependable use of low-cost sensor systems in measuring air pollutant concentrations at finer geographical scales, providing better local forecasts and thus providing better information on air quality.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[147120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that people who are eligible for Covid-19 booster vaccinations have access to local vaccination clinics.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 22 February 2023]:* There are many vaccination sites available for eligible individuals including walk-in centres. We continue to do everything to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccination is convenient and easy for all who are eligible. The



network of vaccination sites has been designed to deliver the expected vaccine supply at pace and ensure safe and easy access for the whole population.

Flexible delivery models such walk-in and mobile vaccination clinics have been used to increase access and convenience of the vaccination offer, particularly for those in deprived communities where ethnic minority groups tend to be overrepresented. Additionally, for those in highly rural areas, where a vaccination site may be more difficult to reach there is a standard operating procedure for roving and other mobile delivery models to go directly to these communities.

The Government has worked closely with the National Health Service to make it as easy as possible to get a vaccine, including through 'grab a jab' pop-up vaccine sites across the country. 99% of the population in England live within 10 miles of at least one COVID-19 vaccination site.

**Julian Knight:**

**[148663]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the autumn covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The most recent data on COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness (VE), including the effectiveness of the bivalent boosters administered as part of the autumn booster programme, are published by the UK Health Security Agency in the monthly surveillance report available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-weekly-surveillance-reports>

VE of the bivalent boosters against hospitalisation was estimated relative to those with waned immunity where the last dose was at least six months prior. The effectiveness measured is therefore incremental effectiveness in addition to at least six months waned protection. The incremental protection conferred was 43.1% for Pfizer after two weeks, and 57.8% for Moderna. Effectiveness was sustained at 10 or more weeks after vaccination at 46.4% for the Pfizer booster and 47.5% for the Moderna booster.

## ■ Cycling and Walking

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[151338]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the role of active travel communities in improving health and wellbeing; and what joint work he is undertaking with that Department on that matter.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There have been no recent discussions. There is ongoing collaborative work between the Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Transport to deliver



the Government's ambition to increase the number of journeys made by cycling and walking.

## ■ Dental Health

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

**[150438]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to produce an updated Equalities Impact Assessment on oral healthcare.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Considering the equality impacts of decisions through an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is an integral part of developing policy within the Department. We undertake EqIAs during the implementation of new policies and projects. We will undertake additional assessments in due course as we introduce further reforms for National Health Service dental care.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Disability

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[150562]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has a Ministerial disability champion.

**Maria Caulfield:**

I have recently been appointed as the Ministerial Disability Champion for the Department of Health and Social Care. I am looking forward to taking up the role and championing disability in the Department.

## ■ Earwax: Medical Treatments

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[149635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support primary and community care settings in offering ear wax removal services.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department does not have plans to intervene in locally-led arrangements for the provision of ear wax removal services. Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning ear wax removal services in local areas in line with the recommendations for ear wax removal as set out in guidance produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng98/chapter/Recommendations>

## ■ Epidermolysis Bullosa: Health Services

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[151382]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of waiting times for the diagnosis of endometriosis.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[151383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate has he made of the current average waiting time between a patient reporting symptoms and a diagnosis of endometriosis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No formal assessment has been made from the Department. Gynaecology waiting lists in England, numbers of women waiting and their waiting times are tracked and managed as part of the overall National Health Service focus on reducing the amount of time patients are waiting for elective care.

Patients with symptoms of endometriosis will be prioritised based on clinical need. The NHS-led Provider Collaborative has identified endometriosis as a priority area and recently established a group to develop further initiatives to reduce waiting times for endometriosis patients.

To help tackle waiting lists, including in gynaecology and endometriosis related surgery the Government plans to spend more than £8 billion over the next three years, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available to systems last year to drive up elective activity and tackle long waiting lists. The Government is investing an additional £3.3 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the NHS in England, enabling rapid action to improve emergency, elective and primary care performance towards pre-pandemic levels.

Taken together, this funding could deliver the equivalent of nine million more checks, scans and procedures and will mean the NHS in England can aim to deliver around 30% more elective activity by 2024/25 than it was before the pandemic.

The Government and NHS have published a delivery plan setting out how this funding will be used to recover from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and transform how planned services are delivered for the long-term benefit of all patients, including women.

The Elective Recovery plan set out NHS England's ambition to deliver 130% of pre-elective activity by 2024/25. Bringing more community diagnostic centres and surgical hubs on stream are key to delivering more activity, both are part of the 'Getting it Right First Time' High-Volume Low-Complexity programme which can provide faster access to care and reduce waiting times including gynaecological procedures such as endometriosis related surgery.

## ■ Health Services: Sign Language

**Dean Russell:**

**[149669]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support offered for people in the health service who use British Sign Language as their first language in (a) Watford constituency and (b) England.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No assessment has been made. In November 2020, NHS England commissioned the North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) to undertake a Rapid Review of British Sign Language (BSL) service provision across England in the National Health Service. The Rapid Review was completed in May 2021 and contained 17 recommendations to address the identified health inequalities experienced by BSL users. NHS England has established and is supporting a national network of BSL Regional Leads to share the outcomes from the BSL Rapid Review and to support the implementation of the Review's recommendations.

Furthermore, following Royal Assent of the BSL Act 2022, the Government Communication Service will promote and facilitate the use of BSL in communications with the public. This is expected to support BSL users to access public services, including health and care services.

**Hospices: Energy Bills Discount Scheme****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[151376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme for hospices.

**Helen Whately:**

No assessment has been made.

**Hospitals: Discharges****Rachael Maskell:**[\[148749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of delayed discharge on patients deconditioning; and what steps he is taking to ensure that patients functional skills continue to advance while waiting for discharge.

**Helen Whately:**

No assessment has been made. However, we know that deconditioning is a risk of continued immobility for hospital patients, especially older people, and this can happen as a result of delayed discharge.

NHS England are testing a new community recovery service at Intermediate Care Pilot sites which will support reduced de-conditioning and improve people's independence.

**Immunosuppression: Coronavirus****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[149550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recent letters sent from the NHS to individuals deemed to be at higher risk from coronavirus, what

steps his Department has taken to ensure that all eligible individuals receive their Government-issued lateral flow tests as quickly as possible.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England has contacted eligible individuals to let them know they should receive their Government issued lateral flow tests within two weeks, to use should they become symptomatic. NHS England commissions NHS Digital to run weekly searches to identify newly eligible people to ensure they are notified of their potential access to treatment and sent tests as quickly as possible. If their tests run out, they can be re-ordered online or by calling 119.

■ **Infectious Diseases: Disease Control**

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[142727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to use (a) vaccination and (b) other treatments, including antivirals amongst vulnerable groups in winter 2023.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 20 February 2023]:* On 25 January 2023, the Government accepted interim advice from the JCVI to plan to offer a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose in autumn 2023 to those at higher risk of severe COVID-19. The Government will confirm the approach to autumn vaccination for COVID-19 once final advice is received from the JCVI later this year.

JCVI's 2023/24 seasonal influenza (flu) advice was published on 30 November 2022 confirming its advice on which vaccines should be prioritised for various at-risk groups. NHS England will publish the 2023/24 reimbursement letter and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will publish the annual flu letter in due course. These will set out details about which cohorts will be offered a free flu vaccine and which vaccines they will be offered.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that can be serious, especially for infants. An RSV monoclonal antibody is offered to a very small group of at-risk infants from each autumn which is the beginning of the annual RSV season. The JCVI is reviewing new products for potentially improving and expanding the RSV immunisation offer. The Government will announce these in due course.

COVID-19 patients in England whose immune system means they are at the highest risk from COVID-19, and who test positive for the virus, can currently directly access antiviral treatments through the National Health Service at any time of year. For flu, the UKHSA will recommend the appropriate timing for antiviral medicines to be prescribed and supplied in both primary and secondary care for patients in clinical at-risk group.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Emergency Calls

**Dan Carden:**

[R] [[148835](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a national mental health emergency helpline which is separate from the NHS 111 service.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The NHS Long-Term Plan commits to ensuring a significant expansion of urgent and emergency mental health care and access to these services via NHS 111.

NHS England specifically sought views on the creation of a separate number for mental health from patients, clinicians and commissioners implementing local services, as well as other national mental health bodies and charities.

To achieve the ambition of a single national three digit number for mental health, stakeholders concurred that rather than creating a separate access point, we should seek to make the current main access points fit for purpose for people with urgent mental health needs.

Within the NHS 111 service, technical developments have been undertaken to ensure the mental health option is offered to callers at the earliest opportunity. These developments will go live for those areas with Mental Health Crisis lines linked via NHS 111 by March 2023, thus improving the wait time for connection to the specialist crisis mental health point of access.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Police Custody

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[[151372](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions has he had with the Home Secretary to ensure adequate mental health support is provided to people in police detention where required.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Rt hon. Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, Chris Philp, chaired a roundtable meeting in December 2022 which I attended along with senior police and health leaders, to discuss future work on mental health and policing.

The Home Secretary announced on 23 February that a National Partnership Agreement will be developed by the end of March 2023 between policing and mental health services. This agreement will seek to ensure that people in need receive the right care from the right person.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

**David Warburton:**

[[149596](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Major Conditions Strategy will help tackle waiting times for mental health (a) counselling and (b) therapy.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Major Conditions Strategy will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care. Interventions set out in the Strategy will aim to alleviate pressure on the health system. An interim report will be published in the summer.

**■ Protective Clothing****Philip Davies:**[\[148551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 February 2023 to Question 141370 on Protective Clothing, what the evidential basis is for the pathogen and disease-specific guidance produced by the UK Health Security Agency; and what the local risk assessment procedure is.

**Maria Caulfield:**

UK Health Security Agency considers a range of evidence when producing pathogen and disease-specific guidance. For example, reviewing the published literature and relevant guidance published by main stakeholders, such as the World Health Organization, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence; consulting with medical and subject matter experts; and considering lessons learnt from previous outbreak investigations. Guidance for specific pathogens or infectious diseases is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

All National Health Service providers have responsibility for their own Infection, Prevention and Control guidance and risk assessments. All decisions are based on clinical evidence, local infection data and are signed off by senior clinicians.

**■ Public Health: Finance****Daisy Cooper:**[\[151417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Question 108393 on Public Health: Finance, when he plans to announce the amounts of public health grants to local authorities for the 2023-24 financial year.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We will announce the 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly.

**■ Schools: Mental Health Services****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[148850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plans are for the operation of the new New Mental Health Support Teams; and whether he has set a provisional date for (a) all pupils having access to those teams at their school, (b)

publication of an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of those teams and (c) those teams being put on a statutory footing.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We have no current plans to put mental health support teams on a statutory footing, and we have not set a date for all pupils across England to have access to mental health support teams. While funding beyond 2024/25 is subject to future spending reviews, we will consider options for the scale and speed out of options beyond that point.

We met our commitment to deploy mental health support teams to 20 to 25% of the country by 2022/23 a year early, with 287 teams in operation covering 26% of the country as of spring 2022. This will increase to 399 teams, covering around 35% of pupils, by April 2023 with over 500 planned to be up and running by 2024. Details of the mental health support team site selection process and rollout is available at the following link:

[www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers](http://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers)

An independent early evaluation of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Trailblazer programme was published in January and is available at the following link:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/brace/projects/children-and-young-people's-mental-health-trailblazer-programme.aspx>

The evaluation examines the development, implementation, and early progress of the first wave of mental health support teams in the first 25 "trailblazer" areas participating in the programme, which became operational from January 2020.

■ **Social Services: Vacancies**

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[150434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle vacancies in the social care workforce.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 27 February 2023]:* We are running a national recruitment campaign until 31 March to encourage more people to consider a rewarding role in care. In addition, the £500 million adult social care discharge fund announced last September can be used for the recruitment and retention of the social care workforce.

In February 2022, we made care workers eligible for the Health and Care Visa and added them to the Shortage Occupation list. This was in addition to senior care workers who were made eligible in January 2021. There has been a strong uptake of international recruitment in the sector since, with the latest Home Office data showing there were 56,900 visa grants for care workers and senior care workers in 2022.

The Government is making available £15 million for the 2023/24 financial year to help local areas establish support arrangements for international recruitment in adult social care.



**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[150435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of social care staff required to deliver on the priorities set out in People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform white paper.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 27 February 2023]:* The Government has not estimated the number of care staff required to deliver our reforms, as growing the workforce is itself one of our top priorities. The People at the Heart of Care white paper set out a vision for adult social care that included improved workforce recruitment and retention, and we are committed to supporting local authorities deliver their workforce planning responsibilities. In spring 2023, we will publish a plan for adult social care system reform. This will set out how we will build on the progress so far to implement our vision for adult social care.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum

**Christopher Pincher:**

[\[150466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum seekers housed in temporary accommodation in (a) Tamworth district, (b) Lichfield district, (c) Staffordshire and (d) England have been granted leave to remain in the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK under the document Asylum seekers in receipt of support (second edition):

Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

The Home Office publish data on the number of people who have been granted and refused asylum in the UK and this can be found in the Asy\_04 tab of the quarterly Immigration Statistics release:

Immigration statistics data tables, year ending December 2022 - GOV.UK (List of tables - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))).

### ■ Asylum: Children

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[150390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many meetings she had with asylum centre providers to discuss reports of abductions of unaccompanied children in the last twelve months.



**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office engages with a range of internal and external stakeholders in relation to the provision of support and accommodation to destitute asylum seekers, through a variety of channels.

The wellbeing of children and minors in our care is an absolute priority. Robust safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure all children and minors are safe and supported as we seek urgent placements with local authorities.

We continue to consult multi-agency partners and subject matter experts to ensure our processes and procedures are robust and evolve as new trends or risks emerge. Local police forces are engaged in ongoing activity where a child fails to return to a hotel and this data is shared across the police national computer as it would be in any case where a child goes missing.

**■ Asylum: Detainees****Anne McLaughlin:**[\[150521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people applied for asylum in 2022 from detention in the UK.

**Anne McLaughlin:**[\[150522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many new asylum applications were submitted in 2022 by people who had previously been refused asylum.

**Anne McLaughlin:**[\[150523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the five most common nationalities of asylum applicants making new claims to the UK were in 2022; and how many of those applications were received from nationals of each of those five countries in that year.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum and detention in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on asylum applications by nationality is published in table Asy\_D01 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Data on the number of people entering, in and leaving detention with an asylum claim is published in table Det\_01 of the '[detention summary tables](#)'.

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to December 2022.

The Home Office does not publish information on applications from individuals previously refused asylum.

**■ Asylum: Legal Profession**

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[149440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of 20 February by the Minister for Immigration, Official Report, column 33, in what way her Department is monitoring the activities of a small number of legal practitioners.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[149441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of 20 February by the Minister for Immigration, Official Report, column 33, how many human rights (a) solicitors, (b) advocates and (c) barristers acting for asylum seekers are being monitored by the Government.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[149442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many human rights lawyers acting for asylum seekers are monitored by her Department in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) Wales.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[149443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Oral contribution of the Minister for Immigration of 20 February 2023, Official Report, column 33, for what reason the Government is undertaking monitoring of human rights lawyers acting for asylum seekers.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[149444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Oral contribution of the Minister for Immigration of 20 February 2023, Official Report, column 33, when she plans to publish findings from the monitoring of human rights lawyers acting for asylum seekers.

**Robert Jenrick:**

People who make dangerous journeys by putting their lives at risk to reach the UK often seek immigration advice. When considering representations, the Home Office ensures that firms raising such immigration matters have the correct regulatory credentials. If evidence exists that obligations have been breached, we may refer the firm to regulators.

**■ Asylum: Stockport**

**Navendu Mishra:** [\[148821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in (a) Stockport borough and (b) Stockport constituency.

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[148822]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers under the age of 18 in hotel accommodation have been reported missing in Stockport (a) borough and (b) constituency in the last two years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets), under the document [Asylum seekers in receipt of support \(second edition\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets). Data are published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 24 November 2022. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in late February 2023.

There are no hotels for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) in Stockport.

The Home Office does not hold data for the number of adult and children asylum seekers that were accommodated via the Home Office that are missing in a reportable format and it would require a manual search of records which would incur a disproportionate cost.

#### ■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

**John Healey:**

**[150388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list the surplus military sites that have been identified as alternatives to hotels for asylum accommodation.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We do not routinely comment on individual sites or proposals that may or may not be used for bridging or asylum accommodation.

**Christopher Pincher:**

**[150465]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in temporary accommodation in (a) Tamworth district, (b) Lichfield district, (c) Staffordshire and (d) England.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets), under the document [Asylum seekers in receipt of support \(second edition\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets). Data are published on a quarterly basis, with the next quarterly figures are due to be released 23 February 2023.

## ■ Community Safety Partnerships

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[148707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Community Safety Partnerships.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government recognises the critical role local policing and wider partnership groups have in the reduction of crime and ASB within communities.

Following the publication of the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) Review Part Two, the Home Office will be reviewing Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across England and Wales.

## ■ Crime: Romford

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[148544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many fatal instances of knife crime occurred in Romford constituency in each year since 2019.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[148578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances of knife crime recorded in the UK were linked to terrorism in each year since 2019.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of offences involving knives or sharp instruments recorded by the police in England and Wales at the Police Force Area level only. Information is not available at the constituency level.

Data are not collected on whether or not knife-enabled offences were linked to terrorism.

## ■ Dual Nationality

**Sarah Owen:** [\[150644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people and from which countries have had their dual citizenship revoked since the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 came into effect.

**Sarah Owen:** [\[150645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will publish the criteria considered when making the decision to deprive an individual of their British citizenship under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

**Sarah Owen:** [\[150646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the protection of people with dual nationality from being subject to deportation under Clause 9 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[150647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have had their British citizenship revoked since the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 came into effect.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 amends provisions concerning the requirement to give notice before making a deprivation order. The power to deprive an individual of British citizenship is provided by section 40 of the British Nationality Act 1981.

The British Nationality Act 1981 provides the Secretary of State with powers to deprive a person of citizenship status on 'conducive to the public good' grounds, or where a person obtained citizenship by means of fraud, false representation or concealment of material fact.

Detail on the numbers of deprivation orders made are published in reports which appear on the gov.uk website.

( see the *Government Transparency Reports: Disruptive and Investigatory Powers, & an immigration statistics report dated 23 February 2023* ).

The latest HMG Counter-Terrorism Disruptive Powers Report 2021 lists conduct which the Government considers may mean that it is 'conducive to the public good' to deprive.

Reflecting the serious nature of the power, every decision to deprive an individual on 'conducive to the public good' grounds, is taken personally by the Home Secretary. Those decisions are made following careful consideration of advice from officials and lawyers and in accordance with international law, including the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Each case is assessed individually, and every decision comes with a right of appeal.

■ **Extradition: USA**

**Mr David Davis:**

[\[151238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 8948 on Tigray: Humanitarian Situation, how many people were extradited from the US to the UK for (a) violent and (b) non-violent crimes in each year since 2018.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR NON- VIOLENT OFFENCES	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES
2018	5	2	3
2019	3	0	3

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR NON- VIOLENT OFFENCES	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES
2020	2	1	1
2021	7	2	5
2022	2	1	1
2023*	3	1	2

\* Figures until 24 February 2023

For the above table, we have taken non-violent offences to include:

- Fraud
- Drug related offences
- Theft
- Forgery
- Money laundering
- Handling stolen goods
- Obtaining property by deception
- Tax evasion
- Unlicensed exporting of goods
- Obstruction of justice
- Bribery

These figures provide updates on previously published statistics for 2018. All figures are from local management information and have not been quality assured to the level of published National Statistics. As such they should be treated as provisional and therefore subject to change. The figures do not include Scotland, which deals with its own extradition cases.

**Mr David Davis:**

**[151239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 4 July 2019 to Question 271379 on Extradition: USA, how many people were extradited from the UK to the United States for non-violent crimes in each year since 2018.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR NON- VIOLENT OFFENCES	TOTAL NUMBER EXTRADITED FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES
2018	7	3	4
2019	13	9	4
2020	10	7	3
2021	7	4	3
2022	16	15	1
2023*	1	1	0

\* Figures until 23 February 2023

For the above two tables, we have taken non-violent offences to include:

- Fraud
- Drug related offences
- Theft
- Forgery
- Money laundering
- Handling stolen goods
- Obtaining property by deception
- Tax evasion
- Unlicensed exporting of goods
- Obstruction of justice
- Bribery

These figures provide updates on previously published statistics for 2018 (table 1) and for 2018 and 2019 (table 2). All figures are from local management information and have not been quality assured to the level of published National Statistics. As such they should be treated as provisional and therefore subject to change. The figures do not include Scotland, which deals with its own extradition cases.

## ■ Fire and Rescue Services: Inflation

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[151384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of inflation on the capacity of fire and rescue services to deliver minimum service levels.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government published a consultation on minimum service levels for Fire and Rescue Services on 9 February. An Impact Assessment to accompany the consultation is available on gov.uk,

The final Local Government Settlement published by the Department for Levelling up, Communities and Housing on 6th February 2023 confirms that Revenue Support Grant and Baseline Funding Levels will increase in line with September CPI (10.1%).

Additionally, the council tax referendum limits for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) have been set at £5 which will provide an additional £67m of income if all standalone FRAs choose to make full use of the flexibility. This settlement represents a good deal for fire and rescue and will help to manage their inflationary pressures

**Home Office: Aviation****Sarah Olney:****[151351]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) number and (b) destinations of all domestic flights taken by officials in her Department in each of the last 5 years.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes information on the number of domestic flights taken by officials in the Annual Report and Accounts.

Please refer to the link and page reference below, which details information for the previous five financial years (April to March).

Page 54 [Home Office ARA 21-22 Final - Gov.uk.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

This includes the distance in km but not the destination.

Domestic flight numbers for financial year 2022-23 will be available when the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23 is published.

**Home Office: Disability****Chris Stephens:****[R] [150537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps they have taken to operate a disability confident scheme for those seeking promotion in their Department; and how many and what proportion of those candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under the scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) promoted in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Disability Confident scheme was formally launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in November 2016. It is designed to give employers the skills, techniques and confidence they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff.

The scheme has 3 levels. To reach Level 3, Disability Confident Leader, an employer must run through a self-assessment of their disabled employment policies and



practices, put this self-assessment up for external validation, produce a plan for encouraging and supporting other employers to become Disability Confident, and undertake to use the Voluntary Reporting framework to publicly report on how they support their disabled staff. All of the main Government Departments are now signed up as Disability Confident Leaders.

Disability Confident employers must commit to offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job. The aim of this commitment is to encourage positive action, encouraging disabled people to apply for jobs and provide an opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talent and abilities at the interview stage.

By offering an interview to an applicant who declares they have a disability this does not mean that all disabled people are entitled to an interview. They must meet the minimum criteria (sometimes otherwise described, for example sometimes shown as “desirable skills”) for a job as defined by the employer.

The Disability Confident scheme notes that there may be occasions where it is not practicable or appropriate to interview all disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job. In certain recruitment situations such as high-volume, seasonal and high-peak times, the employer may wish to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered to both disabled people and non-disabled people. In these circumstances the employer could select the candidates who best meet the minimum criteria for the job rather than all of those that meet the minimum criteria, as they would do for non-disabled applicants.

Although this is the standard set out in the Disability Confident scheme, as the Civil Service aspires to be the UK’s most inclusive employer, we ask that Departments should, where possible, offer an interview to all disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job, in all their recruitment campaigns.

When deciding minimum criteria, consideration should be given to both essential job criteria and minimum performance standards in those criteria. We set the minimum criteria according to the role and the skills required.

Please find below the data regarding candidates who applied under the Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) in 2021:

## 2021

Promotion		Lateral Moves		
	Number	% of Applications	Number	% of Applications
Applications	1806		729	
Completed Interview	333	18.40%	116	15.90%
Formal Offer	97	5.40%	70	9.60%

Please note the following:

- The number of candidates identified as disabled will be dependent upon candidates self-declaring during their registration and application
- We are redacting the data for 2022 due to the number of campaigns with ongoing recruitment activity that would result in incomplete, and therefore inaccurate data, being presented for 2022

Candidates applying on promotion or laterally are only captured for campaigns advertised internally or across-government. Therefore, there will be a number of internal or other government department candidates, who we cannot identify as applying on promotion or level transfer when the campaign was advertised externally.

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [\[151324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme where (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Disability Confident scheme was formally launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in November 2016. It is designed to give employers the skills, techniques and confidence they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff.

The scheme has 3 levels. To reach Level 3, Disability Confident Leader, an employer must run through a self-assessment of their disabled employment policies and practices, put this self-assessment up for external validation, produce a plan for encouraging and supporting other employers to become Disability Confident, and undertake to use the Voluntary Reporting framework to publicly report on how they support their disabled staff. All of the main Government Departments are now signed up as Disability Confident Leaders.

Disability Confident employers must commit to offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job. The aim of this commitment is to encourage positive action, encouraging disabled people to apply for jobs and provide an opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talent and abilities at the interview stage.

By offering an interview to an applicant who declares they have a disability this does not mean that all disabled people are entitled to an interview. They must meet the minimum criteria (sometimes otherwise described, for example sometimes shown as “desirable skills”) for a job as defined by the employer.

The Disability Confident scheme notes that there may be occasions where it is not practicable or appropriate to interview all disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job. In certain recruitment situations such as high-volume, seasonal and high-peak times, the employer may wish to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered to both disabled people and non-disabled people. In these circumstances the

employer could select the candidates who best meet the minimum criteria for the job rather than all of those that meet the minimum criteria, as they would do for non-disabled applicants.

Although this is the standard set out in the Disability Confident scheme, as the Civil Service aspires to be the UK's most inclusive employer, we ask that Departments should, where possible, offer an interview to all disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job, in all their recruitment campaigns.

When deciding minimum criteria, consideration should be given to both essential job criteria and minimum performance standards in those criteria. We set the minimum criteria according to the role and the skills required.

Please find below the data regarding candidates who applied under the Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) in 2021:

## 2021

	Promotion		Lateral Moves	
		Number	% of Applications	
Applications		1806		729
Completed Interview		333	18.40%	116
Formal Offer		97	5.40%	70
				9.60%

Please note the following:

- The number of candidates identified as disabled will be dependent upon candidates self-declaring during their registration and application
- We are redacting the data for 2022 due to the number of campaigns with ongoing recruitment activity that would result in incomplete, and therefore inaccurate data, being presented for 2022
- Candidates applying on promotion or laterally are only captured for campaigns advertised internally or across-government. Therefore, there will be a number of internal or other government department candidates, who we cannot identify as applying on promotion or level transfer when the campaign was advertised externally

**■ Immigration: Appeals**

**Ben Lake:** [\[150585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of appeals allowed by the First-tier Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber up to 4 November 2022 have not yet been implemented.

**Ben Lake:** [\[150586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long on average it takes her Department to implement appeals that have been allowed by the First-tier Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The requested information cannot be accurately extracted from our internal systems. To provide this information would require a manual trawl of successful appeals and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Where an appeal has been allowed in favour of the appellant, and is not subject to onward appeal, we take all reasonable steps to implement the allowed appeal in a timely manner.

**■ London Fire Commissioner**

**Kate Osamor:** [\[148647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2023 to Question 141461 on Grenfell Tower: Fires, whether (a) she or (b) her officials have held meetings with the London Fire Commissioner since January 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

Home Office Ministers and officials have met with the London Fire Commissioner and his team many times since 2020.

These meetings have covered a range of issues, but they have not specifically covered establishing a compensation fund for firefighters who attended the Grenfell fire and have subsequently been diagnosed with cancer.

**■ Police: Urban Areas**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[148711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of visible (a) city centre police and (b) neighbourhood police on (i) levels of crime and (ii) community feelings of safety.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[148712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Secretary, Housing and Communities on coordinating neighbourhood and city centre policing strategies.

**Chris Philp:**

Decisions about neighbourhood policing strategies, including how police resources are best deployed, are a matter for Chief Constables.

We are ensuring that policing has the resources it needs. The Government has confirmed a total police funding settlement of up to £17.2bn for 2023/24, an increase of up to £287m compared to 22/23. We are also on track to recruit 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, taking us for the first time to over 148,400 officers across England and Wales.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, there is a statutory obligation for the police to work with other partners, including Local Authorities, through Community Safety Partnerships to devise strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder at the local level.

- As at 31 December 2022, 16,753 additional uplift officers have been recruited in England and Wales through the Police Uplift Programme, 84% of the 20,000 additional officers by March 2023.
- As at 31 December 2022, North Yorkshire Police has recruited 221 additional uplift officers against a total three year allocation of 194 officers.

**■ Refugees: Afghanistan****Seema Malhotra:****[150497]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to Answer of 24 January 2023 to Question 126658 on Refugees: Afghanistan, whether further individuals will be invited to apply for resettlement as a consequence of applicants being rejected due to security checks.

**Seema Malhotra:****[150498]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January to Question 126658 on Refugees: Afghanistan, whether the entire cohort of an applicant will be rejected if one family member fails security checks .

**Seema Malhotra:****[150499]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 126658 on Refugees: Afghanistan, if she will place in the library guidance on the security undertaken for individuals who were informed of being eligible in principle for resettlement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Security checks are undertaken for all individuals who apply for resettlement to the UK, including under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. Further information on this is set out in the [GOV.UK guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance).

## ■ Research, Information and Communications Unit

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[148797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Research, Information and Communication Unit was formed; and for what purpose.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[148798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department has provided to the Research, Information and Communication Unit in each year since it was formed.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[148799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the report by Big Brother Watch entitled Ministry of Truth: The Secretive Government Units Spying On Your Speech, published in January 2023.

### **Tom Tugendhat:**

The Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was established in 2007 under the Prevent strand of HMG's CONTEST strategy. RICU aims to understand and counter terrorist and extremist ideologies to reduce the risk to the UK, its citizens, and its interests overseas.

RICU provides analysis on terrorist use of propaganda and exploitation of the internet to inform the UK's counter-terrorism system. To support this crucial objective RICU undertakes open-source monitoring to better understand the media, online and communications environment as it relates to terrorism and extremism. All RICU data collection and analysis complies with relevant legislation.

RICU's spend by financial year from the 2011/12 (when our records begin) is provided below. Spend increased from financial year 2012/2013 to support RICU's response to the threat posed by Daesh and from 2017 in response to terrorist attacks in 2017 at Westminster, Manchester Arena, London Bridge, Finsbury Park and Parsons Green. 2022/23 figures are based on spend to date.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND (£)
2010/2011	888,707.64
2011/2012	950,542.97
2012/2013	1,835,952.15
2013/2014	4,285,308.85
2014/2015	12,740,566.39
2015/2016	15,285,788.46
2016/2017	17,121,406.06

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND (£)
2017/2018	23,358,239.69
2018/2019	19,087,916.67
2019/2020	17,399,192.00
2020/2021	20,461,482.00
2021/2022	8,599,531.00
2022/2023	5,072,290.00

We do not recognise this characterisation of RICU's work in this Big Brother Watch report. RICU has supported organisations working to confront the warped ideology of groups like Daesh to protect communities in the UK. This work has helped to position the UK at the forefront of the battle against terrorist propaganda, including the online terrorist content produced by Daesh. Prevent remains a vital tool to divert people from dangerous and poisonous ideologies. We are now implementing all recommendations from the recent Independent Review of Prevent, paving the way for a more transparent, efficient and sustainable programme.

## ■ Slavery

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[148612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to reinstate the multi agency assurance panels overseeing the work of the national referral mechanism for victims of modern slavery; and if she will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Multi-Agency Assurance Panels (MAAPs) were introduced in April 2019, their purpose being to review negative Conclusive Grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) prior to the service of a decision.

On account of the ongoing pressure on the times taken to make decisions in the NRM, we decided to remove the MAAPs from the decision-making timeline in December. The Government remains committed to identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery and it is our intention that the assurance function provided by MAAPs will be replaced with a remodelled assurance process. This will aim to continue to drive improvements in NRM decision-making in a way that does not add time to service of outcomes.

## ■ Visas: Foreign Investment in UK

**John Penrose:**

[\[148577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's review of Tier 1 (Investor) visas, what assessment she has made of the

level of potential risk of (a) money-launderers and (b) other corrupt people attempting to use alternative visa routes; and what steps her Department is taking to prevent this.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The statement of 12 January 2023 made clear the action that the Government has taken in the past to combat this risk and will continue to take in future. Details of these steps, such as the closure of the Tier 1 (Investor) route in February 2022, the establishment of a new Combatting Kleptocracy Cell in the National Crime Agency, new robust legislation to prevent corrupt elites abusing our open economy, and how any future investment-related routes to the UK will be modelled, are set out in that statement.

The Immigration Rules provide for the refusal of entry clearance or permission to enter or stay on the grounds of criminality or where the person's presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good because of their conduct, character, associations or other reasons.

■ **Visas: Graduates**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[148574]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of graduate visa applications took longer to process than the service standard in each quarter from the start of January 2021 to the end of December 2022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Our published data can be found in the available Migration Statistics on GOV.UK, [Immigration statistics, year ending September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-statistics/year-ending-september-2022)

Migration Statistics currently go up to September 2022 and the next quarter to cover up to December 2022 is due for release in the near future.

■ **Visas: Married People**

**Judith Cummins:**

[150510]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of offering a fee waiver for people with a British spouse applying for a visa renewal.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office keeps the fees for immigration and nationality applications under regular review. However, no specific assessment on the potential merits of offering a fee waiver for people with a British spouse applying for a visa renewal has been undertaken.

The Home Office provides exceptions to the need to pay application fees in a number of specific circumstances. These exceptions ensure the Home Office's immigration and nationality fee structure complies with international obligations and wider government policy.



**JUSTICE****■ Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board****Afzal Khan:****[150616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board, what the timeline is for the appointment of a chair of that board; what assessment he has made of the diversity of the membership of that board; and how often that board is expected to meet.

**Mike Freer:**

The Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB) was established following Lord Bellamy's Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR) recommendation that an Advisory Board be established to take a wider view and encourage a more joined-up approach to criminal legal aid within the criminal justice system.

Board meetings take place quarterly and there have been two meetings to date - the first on 28 October 2022 and the second on 24 January 2023.

The first CLAAB meeting took place in October 2022, where CLAAB membership was discussed.

The CLAAB's membership covers the main representative bodies, including the Bar Council, the Law Society, Criminal Bar Association, London Criminal Courts Solicitors' Association, Criminal Law Solicitors' Association, Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) and Ministry of Justice officials, ensuring the Lord Chancellor receives a diverse range of expert views. In addition to the CLAAB, there are a series of sub-groups which include a wide range of subject matter experts to focus on specific areas of reform.

We are currently considering the issue of the Chair of the Board and will make an announcement in due course.

**■ Crown Court: Solihull****Julian Knight:****[148666]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reduce Crown Court backlogs in Solihull constituency.

**Mike Freer:**

We are taking decisive action to reduce the Crown Court backlog. We are recruiting up to 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions in 2022/23 and have removed the limit on sitting days in the Crown Court for the second financial year in a row which will enable us to sit at maximum capacity. We also increased the judicial retirement age to 75 in 2021 to retain more experienced judges.

We have also recently announced the continued use of 24 Nightingale courtrooms into the 2023/24 financial year.

In April 2022, we passed the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act so that remote hearings can continue to be used in criminal proceedings.

We are working with the Crown Court Improvement Group (CCIG), a judicially led consultative body reporting to the Lord Chief Justice, to explore ways to improve the efficiency of the Crown Court.

The impact of the pandemic on the courts has been felt disproportionately across the country. For example, some regions have a greater number of larger courts which meant it was more difficult to run them at capacity under social distancing measures. We are targeting our efforts to support regions, including the Midlands, by encouraging judges to sit in the circuits that are most under pressure and moving work between regions to take advantage of capacity.

## ■ Employment Tribunals Service

**Angela Rayner:**

**[146991]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2023 to Question 133625 on Employment Tribunals Service, what was the mean age at disposal of (a) single claims and (b) multiple claimant cases in the latest quarter for which data is available.

**Mike Freer:**

The mean age of disposals for single and multiples claims is published and can be found on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>. The data is only available up to March 2021.

**Justin Madders:**

**[148757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8th February 2023 to Question 133625 on the Employment Tribunals Service, what steps the Department is taking to reduce the average waiting time for a first hearing.

**Mike Freer:**

We have significantly increased funding to improve waiting times in the civil and family courts and tribunals.

In the Employment Tribunals Service, several measures have been taken to reduce the average waiting time for a first hearing. Following the recruitment of 19 more salaried judges and 150 fee-paid judges in the last year, we will soon appoint up to 35 salaried employment judges and 50 fee-paid judges from the latest recruitment round and plan to continue the judicial recruitment programme in the next financial year to increase numbers further.

To address growing demand, the government invested £2.85 million in December 2022 to allow up to 1,700 more cases to come before judges by the end of March 2023. We created a virtual region of fee-paid judges to hear remote cases from any region. Between April and December 2022 over 100 days were sat and nearly 1,000 cases heard that would have otherwise been postponed.

Additionally, the Judicial Review and Courts Act will transfer Employment Tribunal rule-making powers to the Tribunal Procedures Committee. This independent, judge-led committee will allow the Tribunal to respond more swiftly and flexibly to the challenges it faces through operational changes and rulemaking. This measure will also allow the judiciary to manage their workloads more flexibly, maximising the capacity of the Employment Tribunal.

**Justin Madders:** [148758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time for a claimant taking a claim for unfair dismissal from beginning to end through employment tribunal was in 2022.

**Mike Freer:**

HM Courts and Tribunals Service does not hold the requested information.

**Justin Madders:** [148759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time between a claimant receiving their employment tribunal claim and the completion of their hearings was in each year from 2010 to 2022.

**Mike Freer:**

The average timeliness for Employment Tribunal cases is published and can be found on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>.

The data is only available from October 2012 to March 2021.

**Justin Madders:** [148760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time for a claimant taking a claim for discrimination from beginning to end through employment tribunal was in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

**Mike Freer:**

The average timeliness for discrimination cases is published and can be found on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics>.

The data is only available up to March 2021.

## ■ Prisoners: Employment and Pay

**Steve Reed:** [146990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) male and (b) female prisoners were (i) working in (A) voluntary and (B) paid work placements on release on temporary licence and (ii) paid enhanced wages under the Prisoners Earnings Act 1996 in public sector prisons in the latest period for which data is available.

**Damian Hinds:**

Data on release on temporary licence (ROTL) is published quarterly: [Offender management statistics quarterly: July to September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly).

The following table shows the number of prisoners who had at least one release on temporary licence (ROTL) to a paid work placement from public prisons in England and Wales between 1 July and 30 September 2022 (latest period available):

	Paid work
Male	1,938
Female	195

It is not possible to determine how many individuals were released on ROTL to a voluntary work placement except at disproportionate cost.

Those in paid work placements on ROTL and in receipt of net weekly wages of £20 per week are treated as being in “enhanced wages work” and therefore liable to pay a levy of up to 40% of their earnings, after tax and any court fines or compensation, which helps fund the work of the charity Victim Support. It is not possible, except at disproportionate cost, reliably to determine how many of those in paid work during this period met these criteria, although it is very likely to have been most if not all of them because prisoners in paid work are typically paid at the same rate as employees from the community in the same role for that job.

## ■ Prisoners: Police Custody

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[150578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of prisons becoming over capacity; and what plans he has to use Operation Safeguard.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[150579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the cost of Operation Safeguard was in each of the last three months.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[150580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many police (a) forces and (b) cells have been used in Operation Safeguard in 2023.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[150582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of whether the prison estate will reach full capacity; and whether his Department is taking steps to help increase capacity in prisons.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[150583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what instructions he has issued to police forces about the future use of Operation Safeguard.

**Ellie Reeves:**

**[150584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to issues instructions to the Probation Service on (a) recall and (b) home detention curfew under Operation Safeguard.

**Damian Hinds:**

As our forecast published on 23 February (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-projections-2022-to-2027>) sets out, we expect the prison population to rise over the coming years. This is due to the recruitment of an additional 23,000 police officers, the impact of courts recovering from Covid-19 and long-term sentencing reforms to protect the public by locking up the most dangerous criminals for longer.

Our number one priority is protecting the public and cutting crime by taking dangerous criminals off the streets. We are committed to delivering 20,000 additional modern prison places, the biggest prison build programme in a century. This will ensure the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime and protect the public.

Operation Safeguard is an agreement with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) to bring around 400 police cells into temporary use to hold prisoners. Operation Safeguard was previously triggered in 2006 and then in 2007–2008.

On Monday 20 February, the first Operation Safeguard places became available for use in the North-East, North-West and in the Central Police regions. As of Friday 24 February, 83 prisoners have been held in Operation Safeguard places in police stations in the North-East, North-West and in the Central Police regions and have since been moved into prison. On Monday 20 February, HMPPS gave the Police the required 14 days' notice to activate Operation Safeguard in remaining regions (for use from Monday 6 March). As Operation Safeguard is only being used from this week, there has been no cost to the department in the past 3 months.

HMPPS has engaged with the NPCC and relevant forces frequently on Operation Safeguard, and before police cells were used to house prisoners HMPPS issued clear operational guidance to staff and partners, and remain in regular contact.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Affordable Housing: Construction

**Lisa Nandy:**

**[151281]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the Affordable Homes Programme on the provision of affordable housing.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This Government will continue to invest in the supply of affordable housing.

Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will deliver tens of thousands of affordable homes for both rent and sale, in communities up and down the country.

## ■ Elections: Proof of Identity

**Hywel Williams:** [\[151260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in Wales who do not have an acceptable form of photo ID as set out in the Elections Act 2022.

**Hywel Williams:** [\[151261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications have been made for a Voter Authority Certificate from people living in Wales; and how many of those applications have been successful.

**Lee Rowley:**

Further to the [response](#) to the UQ I gave on the floor of the House on 21 February 2023, the Cabinet Office has published an extensive survey on levels of ownership of photographic identification, which includes geographical breakdowns. The results have been published [here](#).

Information relating to the number of online applications for the Voter Authority Certificate can be found [here](#). This includes data on applications made in England, Wales and Scotland respectively.

**Sarah Olney:** [\[151348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department has spent on the promotion of new voter ID regulations.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [124038](#) on the 19 January 2023.

## ■ Evictions: Homelessness

**Paula Barker:** [\[150664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of changes in the levels of section 21 evictions on the demand for homelessness services.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The department publishes official statistics on homelessness duties owed, including the number of households that are threatened with homelessness following service of a valid section 21 notice.

## ■ Freehold

**Mohammad Yasin:**

**[149537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the letter of 13 February 2023 from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning to the hon. Member for Bedford, reference 24093761, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to give freeholders on private and mixed tenure estates (a) equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate rentcharges and (b) a right to apply to the first-tier tribunal to appoint a new manager to manage the provision of services covered by estate rentcharges.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Announcements will be made in the usual way.

## ■ Housing: Construction

**Julian Knight:**

**[148658]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of encouraging planning developers to include swift bricks in new housing developments.

**Rachel Maclean:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [142794](#) on 23 February 2023.

**Lisa Nandy:**

**[151280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of changes in the National Planning Policy Framework on the supply of new homes.

**Rachel Maclean:**

This Government is committed to accelerating housing delivery to make home buying a reality for a new generation. We want decisions about homes to be driven locally and we want to get more local plans in place to deliver the homes we need. That is why we remain committed to a 300k target.

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the impact assessment for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill [here](#).

The proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework consultation are not, at this time, government policy. We will carefully analyse the responses to the consultation, and any subsequent changes in policy will be confirmed when the Framework is updated later in 2023.

## ■ Levelling Up Fund

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[151291]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to streamline sources of levelling up funding.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[151292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the streamlining of levelling up funding.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Levelling Up White Paper recognised that the local funding landscape is characterised by a patchwork of fragmented funds, separate but often overlapping, each seeking to improve place-based economic development.

Steps are already being taken to address this complexity. UKSPF was designed with simplification in mind and a full plan on simplification will be published shortly.

## ■ Local Plans

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[148733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department takes to support local authorities to develop and deliver local economic plans.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[148734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will ensure that the devolution plan for York and North Yorkshire provides facility to develop an economic plan for the region.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Levelling Up White Paper set out our plans to strengthen local institutions, support private sector partnerships, and build economic clusters to boost local investment, jobs and growth

Devolution deals equip local areas with powers and funding to plan and deliver local priorities for their local economies over the long-term. The York and North Yorkshire deal includes a Mayoral Investment Fund of £18 million per year for 30 years

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[148580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to reply to correspondence of 19 October 2022 from the Rt hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead on significant rent increases on Shared Ownership Properties due to the rise in inflation rates, case reference MP77691IU.

**Rachel Maclean:**

I apologise for the delay in responding to my Rt. Hon. Friend's correspondence. The department attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence from Honourable Members. A response was issued on 24 February 2023.



## ■ Offices: Change of Use

**Paula Barker:**

[150661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on how many councils are using buildings previously designated as office blocks to house the temporarily homeless.

**Paula Barker:**

[150662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an (a) estimate of the number of councils converting office blocks to accommodation through permitted development rights and (b) assessment of the suitability of that practice for tackling homelessness.

**Paula Barker:**

[150663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on how many times permitted development rights have been used (a) to convert buildings and other dwellings into temporary accommodation and (b) for other purposes in England in the last two years.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Department publishes data on how many applications for prior approval for the change of use to residential are able to proceed and how many homes the permitted development rights have delivered.

The figures are readily available online and can be found at [Housing delivery Table 123](#) and [Application data PDR 1](#).

The department does not collect data on the type of buildings local authorities use as temporary accommodation, for more information on the temporary accommodation data please [see here](#).

## ■ Parish Councils: By-elections

**Richard Fuller:**

[148587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what information his Department holds on the average cost of parish council by-elections; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of information provided to parish councils about the cost of such by-elections.

**Lee Rowley:**

The department does not hold this information. Parishes are their own sovereign entity and responsible to their local electors.

## ■ Parking: Codes of Practice

**Karin Smyth:**

[150524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of when the parking code of practice review will be concluded.

**Dehenna Davison:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [54476](#) on 12 October 2022.

■ **Refugees: Ukraine****Mark Pritchard:**[\[148564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish his plans for extending or replacing the Homes for Ukraine scheme; and what additional support he is providing to local authorities and housing associations to help house Ukrainian refugees.

**Felicity Buchan:**

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [131373](#) on the 31 January 2023.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[151282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to prevent homelessness amongst Ukrainian refugees in the UK.

**Felicity Buchan:**

As we have set out previously, we always knew that it was sadly inevitable that a small proportion of sponsorships would fail and that there was a risk that sponsors would be unable to continue sponsoring after the conclusion of their initial period of hosting. We therefore took the decision to extend the period when sponsors can receive 'thank you' payments and to increase the payments for those whose guests have been in the country for over 12 months. Councils have a duty to ensure families have temporary housing and they receive government support for each Homes for Ukraine guest in their area for precisely this eventuality. In addition, we have set out further support, details of which can be found [here](#).

■ **Regional Planning and Development****Steve McCabe:**[\[149394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Institution of Civil Engineers' Policy Position Statement entitled Defining the outcomes from levelling up, published on 16 June 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation that the levelling up missions should be aligned with the UN Sustainable Goals.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is designed to establish the framework for missions, not the content of missions themselves.

The framework provides ample opportunity to scrutinise the substance of missions against a range of Government policies including the Sustainable Development Goals.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Surgical Mesh Implants: Northern Ireland****Emma Hardy:****[151387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on when a specialist mesh treatment centre will be operational in Northern Ireland.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The operation of a specialist mesh treatment centre in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health and a future Northern Ireland Executive. We have had no recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on the subject.

In the absence of an Executive, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has passed legislation that clarifies the powers for Northern Ireland Departments to maintain delivery of public services.

The Government's immediate priority remains facilitating the restoration of a fully functioning Executive that can progress long-term solutions to transform healthcare in Northern Ireland.

**Emma Hardy:****[151388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in the context of treatment of complications from pelvic mesh implant, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board requirement that an Extra Contractual Referral is approved and signed by the surgeon responsible for the original mesh implantation on (a) the emotional well-being of the patient making the request, (b) the likelihood of approval and (c) time taken to make a decision on an approval.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has made no assessment on this matter. The treatment of complications from pelvic mesh implants for patients in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health and the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board.

In the absence of an Executive, the Secretary of State has passed legislation that clarifies the powers for Northern Ireland Departments to maintain delivery of public services.

The Government's immediate priority remains facilitating the restoration of a fully functioning Executive that can progress long-term solutions to transform healthcare in Northern Ireland.

**SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY****■ Broadband and Mobile Phones: Prices**

**Beth Winter:** [\[150656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reviewing mid-contract price rises for broadband and mobile phone providers.

**Beth Winter:** [\[150657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a cap on mid-contract price rises for broadband and mobile phone providers.

**Paul Scully:**

We recognise that this is a difficult time for families across the country who are struggling to pay their bills as a result of the global rise in the cost of living.

The sector remains highly competitive and UK consumers currently access some of the lowest broadband and mobile pricing in Western Europe. To support low-income households stay connected, my department has negotiated a range of high-quality, low-cost social tariffs for households in receipt of Universal Credit and other means tested benefits from as little as £10 per month. These are available in 99% of the UK.

In addition, leaders from broadband and mobile operators agreed on a set of industry [commitments](#) to help people through the global rise in the cost of living. These include manageable payment plans and allowing households, who may be mid-contract but struggling with their bills, to switch to cheaper packages without penalty.

On 23 January, as Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, met with Chief Executives from major broadband providers and made clear her concerns about the impact price rises may have on those who are struggling due to the rise in the cost of living.

On 9 February 2023, Ofcom launched a [review](#) into the transparency of in-contract price rises. We will examine Ofcom's findings once they are published.

**■ Building Digital UK and UK Space Agency: Consultants**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[148571\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what the cost to the public purse of spending on external consultants by (a) the UK Space Agency and (b) Building Digital UK was in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to (A) her predecessor Departments and (B) HM Treasury.

**George Freeman:**

The UK Space Agency (UKSA) does not hold information on the use of consultancy spend in relation to the preparation of funding bids.

**UKSA spend on external consultants:**

YEAR	SPENDING
Financial Year 2019 - 2020	£2.1m
Financial Year 2020 - 2021	£7.6m
Financial Year 2021 - 2022	£7.3m

Building Digital UK (BDUK) spend on external consultants has been to accelerate and support the delivery of Project Gigabit, a flagship programme for Government. This spend was unrelated to the preparation of funding bids for predecessor Departments and HM Treasury.

**BDUK spend on External Consultants:**

YEAR	SPENDING
FINANCIAL YEAR 2019 - 2020	£2.3M
FINANCIAL YEAR 2020 - 2021	£6.5M
Financial Year 2021 - 2022	£6.6m

**■ Horizon Europe****Layla Moran:****[148860]**

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department is taking steps to fully associate the UK to Horizon Europe.

**George Freeman:**

The Government has been tirelessly pushing the EU to implement the UK's association to Horizon Europe including launching consultations in August 2022. The EU has continued to delay UK association to the detriment of researchers in both the UK and EU.

During these delays the Government introduced the Horizon Europe guarantee, which was recently extended to cover all Horizon calls that close on or before 31 March 2023, enabling successful UK-based Horizon applicants to receive funding.

If the EU's delays continue, the Government will be ready to introduce a comprehensive alternative programme to support the UK R&D sector.

**Chi Onwurah:****[151287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make an estimate of the number of UK based researchers who were granted funding by the EU Horizon programme and did not receive that funding in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

**George Freeman:**

All successful, eligible applicants to Horizon Europe who cannot receive grant from the European Commission can receive funding, in full, under the UK government's Horizon Europe Guarantee Scheme. This means that researchers, businesses, and universities can continue their work in the UK and continue important R&D collaboration with European and international partners.

This guarantee was announced in November 2021, with 1,248 guarantee grants awarded up to the end of December 2022 and a further 300 awarded in January 2023. To date, UKRI have issued grants worth over £750 million, to be paid over a 7-year period.

**■ Horizon Europe: Expenditure****Chi Onwurah:**[\[150476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much the Government has spent on funding Horizon Programme guarantees for UK researchers in each year since the UK left the EU.

**George Freeman:**

The Government launched the UK Horizon Europe guarantee in November 2021 to make sure all successful UK applicants to Horizon Europe can access the same, full value of funding from UKRI that they would have received from the EU.

This means that researchers, businesses, and universities can continue their work in the UK and continue important R&D collaboration with European and international partners.

As of 31st January 2023, the Horizon Europe Guarantee, administered via UKRI, had issued grants worth up to £750 million to 1,548 successful applicants.

**■ Horizon Europe: Universities****Layla Moran:**[\[148861\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the UK becoming fully associated to Horizon Europe on universities in the UK.

**George Freeman:**

Due to the EU's delays in implementing the UK's association to Horizon Europe, the Government introduced the Horizon Europe guarantee, which covers all Horizon calls that close on or before 31 March 2023. This has enabled successful UK-based Horizon researchers to receive the full value of their funding and means researchers do not need to relocate abroad. To the end of January 2023, guarantee awards have been made to 1,548 recipients totalling £751 million.

If the EU's delays continue, the Government will be ready to introduce a comprehensive alternative programme to support the UK R&D sector.

**Layla Moran:**

[\[148863\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make an estimate of the number of researchers who have left UK universities due to the delays to the UK's association to Horizon Europe.

**George Freeman:**

The Government has been tirelessly pushing the EU to implement the UK's association to Horizon Europe, but the EU has continued to delay the UK's association.

During these delays the Government introduced the Horizon Europe guarantee, which was recently extended to cover all Horizon calls that close on or before 31 March 2023. This ensures that eligible, successful applicants to Horizon Europe will receive the full value of their funding at their UK host institution for the lifetime of their grant and do not need to leave the UK. The Government does not hold the information requested.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[147444\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when her Department plans to reply to correspondence dated 8 July 2022 and 13 January 2023 from the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, case reference AK52139.

**George Freeman:**

The Department has been unable to acknowledge receipt of your original enquiry of 8 July 2022. It has confirmed receipt of your enquiry of 13 January 2023, and I have now responded.

#### ■ **Science: EU Grants and Loans**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[151286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much of the funding allocated to EU programmes in year one and two of the Spending Review period has been spent (a) in total and (b) on science related projects.

**George Freeman:**

In March 2022, BEIS provisionally allocated £2.35bn this financial year and £2.32bn next year to cover the cost of association, including a significant upfront contribution to the EU paid out to scientists and innovators over a number of years.

As of January 31<sup>st</sup> 2023, grants worth up to £751m have been awarded via the UK government's Horizon Europe Guarantee Scheme, paid over a 7-year period. This is in addition to the packages of R&D investment announced in November 2022 worth up to £684m, including for fusion and earth observation industries. All of this spending is on R&D science related projects. Further details of Departmental expenditure this year will be published in the annual accounts.

**SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION****■ Elections: Proof of Identity****Mick Whitley:**[\[152307\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, whether the Committee plans to make an assessment of the implications for the work of the Electoral Commission of the number of voters turned away at polling stations for not having acceptable ID on 4 May 2023.

**Cat Smith:**

The Speaker's Committee does not have any plans to make an assessment of the matter referred to.

However, the Electoral Commission will publish a full report on how the May elections were delivered, including how voters found taking part, and what lesson can be learned for the future.

As part of this process, the Commission will independently examine evidence about how the new voter ID requirement was implemented. It will collect data from every local authority that held elections, including the number of voters who did not bring an accepted form of ID with them to the polling station and were therefore unable to vote.

**TRANSPORT****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Karl McCartney:**[\[903787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential role of synthetic fuels in meeting net zero targets.

**Jesse Norman:**

Whilst synthetic fuels can be expensive and energy intensive to manufacture, they have the potential to contribute to the decarbonisation of transport sectors where there are limited alternatives, such as in aviation. In recognition of the potential benefits of synthetic fuels produced using renewable power, these fuels are eligible for support under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) certificate trading scheme.

Power-to-liquid (PtL) synthetic fuels will benefit from a specific target in the Department's forthcoming Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) mandate scheme to accelerate their commercial advancement.

**■ Avanti West Coast: Standards****Alison McGovern:**[\[149496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Avanti West Coast trains have been delayed for more than 15 minutes since 1 January 2023.



**Huw Merriman:**

This information is publicly available through The Office of Rail and Road's data portal. It can be found at the following link:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/>.

**Alison McGovern:**

[149497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Avanti West Coast trains have been cancelled due to staff shortages since 1 January 2023.

**Huw Merriman:**

Avanti West Coast has reported a total of 459 full cancellations compared to 11,325 planned services since 1 January 2023 attributed to staff shortages.

**Alison McGovern:**

[149504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Avanti West Coast trains were cancelled each calendar month of 2022.

**Alison McGovern:**

[149505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Avanti West Coast trains were delayed in each calendar month of 2022.

**Huw Merriman:**

This information is publicly available through The Office of Rail and Road's data portal. It can be found at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/performance/passenger-rail-performance/>.

Whilst the question refers to calendar months, railway performance information is presented in four-weekly rail periods as standard.

## ■ Avanti West Coast: Travel Information

**Alison McGovern:**

[149498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much notice Avanti West Coast is required to provide before cancelling a train.

**Huw Merriman:**

The requirements in terms of notice in the event of a change to the timetable, including planned cancellations, vary depending on the circumstances of the change. They are set out in the contract, and particularly in Schedule 1.2A, which is publicly available and can be found on the Government website at the following link:

[GOV.UK - West Coast Partnership 2019 rail franchise agreement](#)

## ■ Aviation

**Paul Maynard:**

[149417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the value of aviation ground services to the UK.

**Jesse Norman:**

As part of the Government's 22-point plan to deal with summer disruption, it has been carrying out a review of the ground handling sector to assess whether it is providing quality and efficiency.

The Government have been building a strong understanding of the value of the ground handling industry in the UK. It will be publishing the findings of the review shortly on GOV.uk, including information on the value of aviation ground services to the UK.

**■ Aviation Council****Paul Maynard:****[149416]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the (a) membership, (b) terms of reference and (c) minutes from the first meeting of the Aviation Council.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has published the membership and the Terms of Reference of the Aviation Council online. [[Aviation Council - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/aviation-council)]. The Minutes of meetings will also be published, shortly after each meeting, on the same forum.

**■ Aviation: Strikes****Paul Maynard:****[149414]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has met with operators of aviation ground services to discuss strikes disruption in that sector.

**Jesse Norman:**

UK aviation operates in the private sector and industrial relations are managed between the employer and the union. During strike action, the Department expects ground handling services to ensure appropriate contingency plans are in place which minimise any potential disruption, work with the airlines and airports and put the consumer first.

Officials engage regularly with ground handling companies, along with all of the aviation sector in order to understand preparedness for any disruption caused by industrial action.

**Paul Maynard:****[149415]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential socio-economic impact of strikes in the aviation ground services sector and possible disruption to critical just-in-time cargo and essential connectivity.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government recognises the value and critical role of the aviation ground handling sector. However, it is also important to recognise that the sector operates predominately in the private sector. It is the responsibility of industry to ensure that appropriate contingency plans are in place to manage periods of industrial action

effectively, to meet the contractual obligations they may have and ensure positive outcomes for passengers.

**Paul Maynard:**

[\[149418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has met with representatives of the aviation ground services sector to discuss the potential disruption caused by possible strikes in that sector.

**Jesse Norman:**

UK aviation operates in the private sector and industrial relations are managed between the employer and the union. During strike action, the Department expects ground handling services to ensure appropriate contingency plans are in place which minimise any potential disruption, work with the airlines and airports and put the consumer first.

Officials engage regularly with ground handling companies, along with all of the aviation sector in order to understand preparedness for any disruption caused by industrial action.

## ■ **Blue Badge Scheme: Terminal Illnesses**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[150420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to issue indefinite disabled person's parking badge entitlements to people with progressive conditions such as Parkinson's.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Applications to the Blue Badge scheme are not dependent upon condition but are based on the need of the applicant to park closer to their destination. Local authorities are responsible for administering the scheme locally and all local authority administrators have the discretion to add a 'not for reassessment' marker to individual Blue Badge records, including for applicants with Parkinson's.

## ■ **Buses: Driving**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[151391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the trend in the level of bus driver vacancies.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The most recent Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) estimate is that almost 1 in 10 bus driver positions in the UK were vacant in September 2022. Findings from CPT's most recent driver shortage run in February are expected to be known shortly.

In November 2022, the Department and CPT co-chaired a Bus and Coach Driver Summit to understand and address the issues causing driver shortages. Following the Bus and Coach Driver Summit, the Department has been working with CPT to take forward the actions identified at the summit.

## ■ Department for Transport: Aviation

**Sarah Olney:** [\[151349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many domestic flights have been taken by officials in tis Department in each of the last 5 years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The information on domestic flights booked by Central Department officials since January 2018, through the Department's travel booking supplier is:

PERIOD	DOMESTIC FLIGHTS BOOKED
2018	436
2019	281
2020	146
2021	92
2022	230

## ■ Department for Transport: Disability

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[150564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has a Ministerial disability champion.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

I am the Department's Ministerial Disability Champion.

## ■ Driverless Vehicles

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[151288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress his Department has made on bringing forward legislative proposals to enable the use of autonomous vehicles on roads.

**Jesse Norman:**

In August 2022 the Government published '*Connected & Automated Mobility 2025: Realising the benefits of self-driving vehicles in the UK*', setting out the government's vision to enable the deployment of self-driving vehicles in the UK by 2025. This includes bringing forward proposals for a comprehensive regulatory, legislative and safety framework. The Government intends to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

## ■ Driving: Eyesight

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[151369]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether eye tests performed by NHS eye specialists are considered by the DVLA when there is a discrepancy between their results and the results of Specsavers tests.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Driving licence holders and applicants who notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) of a medical condition that may affect their eyesight may be required to attend a visual field test before a driver licensing decision can be made.

Specsavers currently provide this service and carry out eyesight examinations to the specifications required to enable the DVLA to assess whether the visual field requirements for driving can be met.

The DVLA will consider alternative and relevant medical evidence, including for eyesight, that is provided by a driver or applicant in support of an application for a driving licence. While many opticians, eye clinics and hospitals can identify a visual field defect, the testing carried out for clinical purposes does not always meet the specifications required for assessing vision for driving licence purposes.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[151370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has any plans with the DVLA to change or increase the number of partners that provide drivers' medical visual field and visual acuity testing for the DVLA.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[151371]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of Specsavers performance in their role as the sole partner for DVLA drivers' medical visual field and visual acuity testing.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Driving licence holders and applicants who notify the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) of a medical condition that may affect their eyesight may be required to attend an appointment for a visual field test to ensure they meet the required standard for driving.

Prior to 2014, the DVLA dealt with many individual opticians on an ad-hoc basis. This was not cost effective so in line with public contract requirements, Specsavers was awarded the vision testing contract following comprehensive consideration of the bids received against the published evaluation criteria. The DVLA is currently considering its requirements for vision testing, including visual field and visual acuity testing, in anticipation of the current contract expiring.

Specsavers' performance is monitored monthly, in line with the terms of the contractual agreement. Specsavers is meeting all key performance indicators, which include measures for turnaround and quality.

**■ East Coast Main Line and West Coast Main Line: Passengers****John Spellar:** [\[151237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many passengers travelled on the (a) East and (b) West Coast Main Lines in (i) first and (ii) standard class in (A) 2019 and (B) 2022.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Office for Road and Rail (ORR) are responsible for collecting and publishing national statistics on rail passenger journeys. The ORR do not disaggregate between first and standard class for this dataset.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****David Warburton:** [\[149599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what public funding is available in Somerset to support the expansion of the electric vehicle charging network.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is accelerating the rollout of public EV charging infrastructure across the country by providing funding through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS), the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund and the Rapid Charging Fund (RCF).

Two local authorities in Somerset have already received funding from the ORCS scheme:

- West Somerset and Taunton Council have received £136,000.
- Mendip District Council have received £322,500.

Other local authorities in this region are still able to apply to this fund.

The LEVI fund will support local authorities to work with industry and transform the availability of charging infrastructure for drivers without off-street parking. The RCF will future-proof the electrical capacity at strategic locations to support ultra-rapid charging on route.

OZEV also offers a range of grants to support home, workplace and destination charging. This includes the EV Chargepoint Grant for owner occupiers of flats, renters and landlords, as well as for businesses through the Workplace Charging Scheme.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries****Dan Carden:** [\[151392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on support for the electric car industry.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Secretary of State for Transport meets regularly with Cabinet colleagues and works with them to ensure that there is a coordinated cross-Whitehall approach to the UK's commitment to Net Zero by 2050, which includes decarbonising the transport sector.

**■ High Speed 2 Line****Alan Brown:**[\[149595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the estimated cost of HS2 (a) phase 1, (b) phase 2a, (c) phase 2b and (d) HS2 East is.

**Huw Merriman:**

A cost estimate for each Phase of the HS2 scheme was provided in the most recent Parliamentary Report published in October 2022. The Department remains committed to providing regular updates to Parliament on the progress of the programme with a further update due in early spring.

**■ High Speed Two: Communication****Greg Smith:**[\[149678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the value for money of HS2 Ltd's £8,086,998 annual spend on communications and community engagement.

**Huw Merriman:**

An estimated 2.4 million people live within five miles of the HS2 route in rural areas, and within one mile in urban areas, across 58 local authorities and 75 parliamentary constituencies. Specialist teams in HS2 Ltd engage with communities and stakeholders across 200 miles of the proposed route to help ensure that there is a level of understanding and transparency around the impacts of construction on those affected. Similarly, HS2 Ltd's 24-hour Helpdesk responds to around 30,000 enquiries a year, and the HS2 website ([www.hs2.org.uk](http://www.hs2.org.uk)) received over 1.9 million visits in 2022.

The Department for Transport monitors all HS2 Ltd expenditure in order to ensure value for money for the taxpayer.

**■ Large Goods Vehicles: Standards****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[R\] \[150397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to impose new standards for Heavy Goods Vehicles for the whole of the UK in line with those proposed for London.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

There are no plans to alter our national road vehicle construction and use regulations. All local authorities are already able to introduce enhanced requirements to address specific concerns in their area, as Transport for London are proposing.

## ■ Offshore Industry: Missing Persons

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[151419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2023 to Question 135415 on Offshore Industry: Missing Persons, whether representatives from Liberia have travelled to the UK to investigate Valaris 121; and what other steps the Liberian authorities have taken.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

A representative from the Liberian registry investigation team visited Valaris 121 on 14 February 2023. Requests were also made for documentation and information to be provided by the vessel and operating company, and the Liberian investigation is progressing.

As a substantially interested state, the UK will continue to receive periodic updates on the investigation and will have sight of the Liberian draft report once it has been prepared.

## ■ Offshore Suppliers

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[151425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what regulatory approach the Maritime and Coastguard Agency takes to offshore support vessels contracted to service (a) oil and gas or (b) renewable energy installations located outside UK territorial waters.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

In regard to both oil and gas and renewable energy installations, Offshore Support Vessels require certification in accordance with the applicable conventions subject to the gross tonnage (GT) and/or length, number of passengers carried on board, flag state legislation and the national legislation of the waters where the vessel is operating. Emergency Response Rescue Vessel (ERRV) certification is an option that is available to UK operators, however, there is no statutory requirement to hold this certificate as this is a UK oil and gas initiative.

Offshore Support Vessels that carry more than 12 passengers are required to be certificated as passenger vessels. Alternative provisions are allowed where passengers are deemed special personnel and as such, the vessel may be certificated as a Special Purpose Ship (SPS) where compliant with this Code.

Offshore Support Vessels that carry less than 12 passengers that are less than 24m in length may be certificated as a Workboat to the appropriate category of operation.

The above regulations are extant for both UK and non-UK vessels, regardless of area of operation.

The sector of work for offshore supply vessels does not change the certification of them. Offshore Support Vessels are certificated with the applicable Conventions subject to the GT and/or length, number of passengers or UK/national legislation, where they are outside of the applicable limits of the appropriate convention. Where a vessel carries Industrial Personnel (IP), outside of the limits of a High Speed Offshore



Service Craft Code (HSOSC) certificate, the vessels fall into the same category of SPS for UK vessels (as per above) or if non-UK, an IP Safety Certificate may be provided as per Safety of Lives at Sea (SOLAS) XV. High Speed vessels operated by UK operators have the option of certification to the HSOSC Code.

## ■ Offshore Suppliers: Inspections

**Kenny MacAskill:**

**[151424]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many non-UK registered oil and gas support vessels were inspected by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in each year from 2014-15 to 2021-22.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Non-UK vessels are inspected under the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Port State Control Inspection regime. The database of inspections uses categories of vessel rather than the industry the vessels serve. In this instance, oil and gas support vessels are in the category of "Offshore Supply" which may also include vessels, such as wind farm vessels. Therefore, the number of inspected non-UK registered oil and gas support vessels cannot be accurately provided.

However, from 2014 to 2019 the Maritime and Coastguard Agency inspected on average 144 foreign flagged Offshore Supply vessels under the Port State Control Regime each calendar year. The Covid-19 pandemic reduced this to 88 inspections in 2020 and 119 in 2021. The number of foreign flagged Offshore Supply Vessels inspected under the Port State Control regime is now back to pre-pandemic levels with 144 inspected in 2022.

The table below shows the number of UK Offshore Supply inspections carried out in each year from 2014-2022.

### UK OFFSHORE SUPPLY INSPECTIONS

Year	Inspections by MCA
2014	154
2015	139
2017	143
2018	140
2019	151
2020	88
2021	119
2022	144

**■ Pedestrian Crossings**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[150652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to review the criteria with which local authorities assess whether pedestrian crossings should be introduced.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The management of local roads, including provision of pedestrian crossings, is the responsibility of individual local traffic authorities. It is for them to ensure their streets are designed to provide safe movement for all road users.

**■ Road Safety Investigation Branch**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[R\] \[150394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects to bring forward legislative proposals to establish the Road Safety Investigation Branch and give it the powers set out in the consultation response published in June 2022 entitled Deepening our understanding of road traffic collisions and how best to address them.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Government intends to bring forward measures to enable the creation of a Road Safety Investigation Branch as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

**■ Road Traffic Control: Police**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[R\] \[150391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to introduce road safety measures in response to the inclusion of roads policing in the Strategic Policing Requirement.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

As part of the current review into roads policing and traffic enforcement, the Government is listening closely to the concerns of those affected by tragic cases of death or serious injury on our roads. This helps shape Government thinking and policy going forward.

**■ Roads: Accidents**

**James Daly:** [\[150674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made of an assessment of the feasibility of introducing secondary legislation to require drivers to stop and report an accident with a cat.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

It would not be possible to do this without amendment to primary legislation.

## ■ Roads: Safety

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[R] [\[150393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on the Road Safety Strategic Framework; and on what date he plans to publish that plan.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Department for Transport is developing the new Road Safety Strategic Framework (RSSF) and it is our intention, subject to wider consultation and agreement, to publish in the spring.

## ■ TransPennine Express Rail Franchise

**Dan Carden:**

[\[151390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to end the Trans Pennine Express contract in May 2023.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department in partnership with Transport for the North will make an announcement in due course.

## ■ Transport: Accidents

**James Daly:**

[\[150675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) deaths and (b) serious injuries occurred per million miles travelled on (i) roads and (ii) railways in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The rate of deaths and serious injuries for different modes of transport, including road and railways, covering each of the last 10 years for which data are available, can be found in the table below.

**PASSENGER CASUALTY RATES PER BILLION PASSENGER KILOMETRES  
BY MODE (ROAD, AIR, RAIL AND WATER): GREAT BRITAIN, FROM 2006**

Transport mode		Severity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Air	Killed	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Air	KSI	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Rail	Killed	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Rail	KSI	80.2	85.5	82.8	91.0	88.0	87.8	80.4	80.0	84.7	136.1	103.4	
Water	Killed	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.6	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Water	KSI	92.6	43.2	39.6	47.4	44.9	43.1	18.4	67.2	68.5	53.7	22.7	

**PASSENGER CASUALTY RATES PER BILLION PASSENGER KILOMETRES  
BY MODE (ROAD, AIR, RAIL AND WATER): GREAT BRITAIN, FROM 2006**

<b>Bus or coach</b>	<b>Killed</b>	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
<b>Bus or coach</b>	<b>KSI</b>	13.1	12.5	13.2	12.5	11.8	12.1	9.7	12.0	10.6	11.9	11.0
<b>Car</b>	<b>Killed</b>	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2
<b>Car</b>	<b>KSI</b>	21.9	21.3	19.8	20.3	19.3	18.6	17.5	17.8	17.3	17.2	17.7
<b>Van</b>	<b>Killed</b>	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
<b>Van</b>	<b>KSI</b>	5.9	6.1	6.1	6.2	6.0	5.2	4.9	5.4	5.1	4.8	5.5
<b>Motorcycle</b>	<b>Killed</b>	71.9	72.9	72.0	71.3	76.5	66.3	73.2	75.0	72.5	75.8	70.6
<b>Motorcycle</b>	<b>KSI</b>	1,495.2	1,593.8	1,520.3	1,587.5	1,522.4	1,475.9	1,394.4	1,380.6	1,316.1	1,276.8	1,268.8
<b>Pedal cycle</b>	<b>Killed</b>	21.0	21.9	20.9	19.6	18.4	18.8	18.1	17.5	17.1	16.5	16.4
<b>Pedal cycle</b>	<b>KSI</b>	907.7	885.1	908.9	898.6	878.5	839.3	813.4	797.9	744.5	524.9	660.7
<b>Pedestrian</b>	<b>Killed</b>	23.2	22.2	20.3	23.3	20.8	22.0	22.1	20.9	22.0	15.0	16.3
<b>Pedestrian</b>	<b>KSI</b>	425.9	437.4	387.3	405.1	381.0	349.2	334.1	332.9	327.6	204.9	243.5

■ **Transport: Safety**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[R] [\[150395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Retained EU Legislation (Revocation and Reform) Bill on (a) rail and (b) road safety.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Department for Transport is firmly committed to improving safety across the transport sector, and this will be a priority as it reviews the body of retained EU law.

Whilst there will be opportunities to review and amend individual pieces of retained EU law, the Department will ensure both that the regulatory landscape adheres to international obligations and upholds high standards for transport and travel safety.

**TREASURY**■ **Business: VAT****Wendy Chamberlain:****[151416]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses became eligible to pay VAT in (a) 2023 and (b) each of the preceding five years; and if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of those businesses that would not have become eligible for VAT payments if the threshold had risen in line with inflation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU Member State and the second highest in the OECD at £85,000. This keeps the majority of businesses out of VAT altogether.

The number of businesses newly registering for VAT in each year can be found here: [Value Added Tax \(VAT\) annual statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/value-added-tax-vat-annual-statistics), see Table T2.

■ **Car Allowances****Charlotte Nichols:****[149645]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to review mileage rates.

**James Cartlidge:**

Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) are used by employers to reimburse an employee's expenses for business mileage in their private vehicle.

AMAPs are intended to create administrative simplicity and certainty by using an average rate, which reflects vehicle running costs including fuel, servicing and depreciation. Fuel is therefore only one component. As an average, it will necessarily be more suitable for some drivers than others. This may vary across sector.

The AMAP rate is advisory and employers can choose to pay more or less than the advisory rate. It is therefore ultimately up to employers, including public sector organisations, to determine the rate at which they reimburse their employees. Employees who receive less than the AMAP rate can claim tax relief on the difference. Employees who receive more will be taxed on the difference.

Like all taxes and allowances, the Government keeps the AMAP rate under review.

■ **High-risk Wealth Programme****James Murray:****[150650]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 30 January 2023 to Question 131456 on High-risk Wealth Programme and the Answer of 20 February 2023 to Question 136859, how many unique cases were included in the High Risk Wealth Programme between 2017-18 and 2021-22.

**Victoria Atkins:**

I refer to the responses provided on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023 to PQ UIN 131456 and on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to PQ UIN 136859.

Over 2017-18 to 2021-22, two thirds of cases considered were included in the High Risk Wealth Programme (HRWP).

The HRWP was introduced in 2017-2018. The programme is reserved for our most complex and highest risk cases and we therefore do not expect a large number of cases to enter these programmes each year.

HRWP is just one aspect of our compliance approach, you can find out more about HMRC's compliance approach [here](#).

**■ Medical Equipment: Energy****Ian Byrne:**[\[150667\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the impact of rises in domestic energy prices on people who receive treatment at home for chronic diseases and disabilities.

**Ian Byrne:**[\[150668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with (a) families with children who receive life-saving treatment at home for chronic diseases and disabilities and (b) representatives of families with children who receive life-saving treatment at home for chronic diseases and disabilities on the impact of the rising cost of energy.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and I meet regularly to discuss a range of topics including the rises in energy bills and the cost of living. The Government also meets with disability focus groups and charities to understand the impacts the changes in the cost of living are having on disadvantaged people, which includes those who use life-saving treatment at home. The Government recognises that the rising cost of living has presented additional financial challenges to many people, and especially to the most vulnerable members of society, such as disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. That is why the Government has taken decisive action to support households while ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way. This includes the announcement at Autumn Statement of a further Disability Cost of Living payment of £150 in 2023/24 to people in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA), in addition to the £150 payment from the Cost of Living package in May last year. These payments can be received in addition to the other Cost of Living Payments for households on means-tested benefits, namely the £650 payment announced in May and the additional £900 payment announced at Autumn Statement.

For those not eligible for this support, or who may need additional help, the government is making another £1bn available (including Barnett funding for the devolved administrations) from 01 April 2023 to enable a further twelve-month extension to the Household Support Fund in England. The fund will continue to enable Local Authorities to support the most vulnerable households with the cost of food, energy and other essentials.

## ■ Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation

**Michael Fabricant:**

**[150382]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to assess the work of the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation; and if he will make a report to Parliament on monies released to Yevgeny Prigozhin to pursue a court case against a British journalist.

**James Cartlidge:**

HM Treasury is considering its approach to licensing to see if any changes are required to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation's (OFSI) licensing practice in relation to legal fees licence applications. We need to carefully balance the right to legal representation - which is a fundamental one - with wider issues of public policy.

HM Treasury does not comment on specific licensing cases. We will update Parliament appropriately on the wider considerations in due course.

## ■ Treasury: Aviation

**Sarah Olney:**

**[151350]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) number and (b) destinations of all domestic flights taken by officials in his Department in each of the last 5 years.

**James Cartlidge:**

As part of the Transparency Agenda HM Treasury publishes data quarterly regarding senior official travel. Details can be found at the following link

[HMT senior officials' business expenses, hospitality and meetings with external organisations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmt-senior-officials-business-expenses-hospitality-and-meetings-with-external-organisations)

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Access to Work Scheme

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[133680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications to the Access to Work Scheme were outstanding as of 26 January 2023 in (a) England, (b) Wales and (c) Scotland.

**Tom Pursglove:**

There was a total of 24,565 applications to the Access to Work scheme outstanding as of 26 January 2023. We do not hold the information separately for (a) England, (b) Wales and (c) Scotland.

Access to Work has received a significant increase in applications over the last year and we have recruited new staff to meet the increased demand and reduce the time it takes to make decisions. Customers making new applications, where they are starting work within the next 4 weeks, or have a grant coming to an end that requires renewal, are prioritised to ensure that customers are able to enter and remain in the labour market. We are also transforming the Access to Work service through increased digitalisation, that will make the service more efficient, will make the application process easier, and improve the time taken from application through to decision.

**Bereavement Benefits: Cohabitation****Julian Knight:**[\[147044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to help support cohabiting parents who need financial support following bereavement apply for bereavement benefits.

**Mims Davies:**

We have updated GOV.UK to provide details of how surviving cohabiting parents can make a claim for bereavement benefits. For Bereavement Support Payment, claims can be made online via GOV.UK, or by calling the DWP Bereavement service, or via a paper claim downloadable from GOV.UK or claimants can call DWP's Bereavement Service to request that a form be sent via post.

Claims for Widowed Parent's Allowance can be made via a paper form, which must be submitted to DWP by post. The form can be downloaded from GOV.UK, or claimants can call DWP's Bereavement Service to request that a form be sent via post.

**Bereavement Support Payment: Cohabitation****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[147009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to inform previously unsuccessful applicants to the Bereavement support payment scheme about the recent change to that scheme which will enable unmarried bereaved partners to access those payments.

**Mims Davies:**

We do not routinely keep details of people who have originally claimed and been refused Bereavement Support Payment on the basis of being in a cohabiting relationship. We therefore do not intend to contact previous claimants directly.

We have, however, taken a range of steps to raise awareness, including updating GOV.UK and using existing DWP channels to communicate this change to claimants



and interested external organisations. We have also, and will continue to, collaborate closely with key external stakeholders such as the Childhood Bereavement Network, to ensure that information about the scheme is accessible.

## ■ Child Maintenance Service

**Amy Callaghan:**

[\[147452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Child maintenance, published in March 2022, whether he has taken recent steps to help improve levels of customer service at the Child Maintenance Service.

**Mims Davies:**

The Minister for Lords and officials appeared at the Work and Pensions Select committee on 18 January 23 to discuss 'Children in poverty: Child Maintenance Service' which included discussion on recommendations from NAO and the domestic abuse review conducted by Dr Samantha Callan.

These discussions highlighted the following;

- Continuing to improve our service, in particular our online services through the wider Departmental Service Modernisation.
  - o Services that have been made available online and therefore 24/7 and, in many cases, now delivered via automation and therefore faster and more responsive.
  - o The introduction of online Get Help Arranging Child Maintenance service providing support to separated parents in managing their own affairs as well as making the CMS more accessible.
  - o A wider organisational redesign is underway with a key priority to improve customer experience.
- Dr Samantha Callan Review recommendations:
  - o Recommendations on training have been adopted: domestic abuse awareness training is in place and training is being reviewed with a view to strengthening.
  - o Recommendation on single caseworker treatment is being piloted currently.
- Use of the DWP customer experience survey to track satisfaction levels and provide insight.
  - o The Department's 2020/21 Customer Experience Survey and the CMS Customer Experience Survey are currently unpublished, so we are unable to share the findings at this time.
  - o The reason for the delay is because of the impacts of Covid on the survey, resulting in an extended QA process.
  - o Steps are in place to publish the findings and the final sign off procedures are currently taking place within the Department, with the intention to publish by Summer 2023.

- Real time customer feedback has been piloted now considering how to introduce at scale.
- Sessions planned in March for MP researchers to support them in constituency casework relating to Child Maintenance.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Amy Callaghan:**

**[147450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Audit Office report entitled Child maintenance, published in March 2022, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help increase the number of successful child maintenance arrangements.

**Mims Davies:**

As at September 2022 there were 872,000 children covered by Child Maintenance Service (CMS) arrangements. The service has recorded an increase in the number of children covered by CMS arrangements increasing by 25,700 between June 2022 and September 2022.

Under the Direct Pay service Child Maintenance Service provides the calculation and no further use of the service is required. Parents are issued a text message three months after they set up their arrangement and at each annual review, to check the arrangement is still meeting their requirements. If they cannot arrange payments between themselves or a Paying Parent does not keep up with the payments, the Receiving Parent can ask to switch to the Collect and Pay Service.

61% of all Child Maintenance Service arrangements use Direct Pay with 37% using Collect and Pay.

At the end of September 2022:

- 548,800 children were covered by 384,600 Direct Pay arrangements
- 304,200 children were covered by 231,000 Collect & Pay arrangements 164,800 of these children were covered by 117,500 Collect & Pay arrangements where the Paying Parent paid some maintenance during the quarter 139,400 of these children were covered by 113,500 Collect & Pay arrangements where no maintenance was paid during the quarter

The number of children covered by CMS arrangements has increased steadily over the last 2 years.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published statistics – data to September 2022)*

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) continues to take rigorous action to collect maintenance, combining robust negotiation activity with the highly effective use of its extensive range of Enforcement Powers. This approach is driven by the Payment Compliance strategy increasing CMS compliance influencing activities to tackle non-paying cases and challenge non-compliant behaviours. CMS applies a Continuous Improvement focus to Enforcement strategy and processes.

Total child maintenance collected using enforcement actions amounted to £36.1 million in the quarter to September 2022 compared with £33.8 in September 2021 and £28.4 in September 2020. This rise in collections is linked directly to increased collections through Deductions from Earnings Orders, lump sum and regular deductions taken directly from paying parents' bank accounts, Liability Order and Bailiff actions and making full use of all available sanctions.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables – table 7.1 'Enforcement Actions', April 2015 to September 2022).*

As a result of a focussed effort to increase enforcement activity and influence Paying Parents to pay their child maintenance £49.4 million was paid through the Collect & Pay service in the quarter to September 2022 compared to £45.6 million in the quarter ending March 2022 when the NAO report was published.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables – table 5 'Money Due and Paid each quarter' January 2015 to September 2022).*

There has been a consistent downward trend in the proportion of unpaid maintenance as a proportion of maintenance arranged since 2017, falling from 12.5% in 2017 to 8.2% in September 2022.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables - table 6 'how much maintenance CMS has arranged March 2015 to September 2022).*

**Amy Callaghan:**

**[147451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the charge paid by single parents when seeking support from a former partner through the Child Maintenance Service.

**Mims Davies:**

The £20 Child Maintenance Service (CMS) application fee is designed to encourage parents to consider whether they can make their own private family-based arrangements rather than apply to the statutory scheme by default as this tends to be in the best interests of children.

The fee is waived if domestic abuse has been experienced by the applicant or any children in the household and for parents aged under 19 to ensure the most vulnerable do not face a barrier in accessing the statutory scheme.

**Amy Callaghan:**

**[147453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Child Maintenance Service's system of payment enforcement.

**Mims Davies:**

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) continues to take rigorous action to collect maintenance, combining robust negotiation activity with the highly effective use of its extensive range of Enforcement Powers. This approach is driven by the Payment Compliance strategy increasing CMS compliance influencing activities to tackle non-

paying cases and challenge non-compliant behaviours. CMS applies a Continuous Improvement focus to Enforcement strategy and processes.

Total child maintenance collected using Enforcement Actions amounted to £36.1 million in the quarter to September 2022 compared with £33.8 in September 2021 and £28.4 in September 2020. This rise in collections is linked directly to increased collections through Deductions from Earnings Orders, lump sum and regular deductions taken directly from paying parents' bank accounts, Liability Order and Bailiff actions and making full use of all available sanctions.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables – table 7.1 'Enforcement Actions', April 2015 to September 2022).*

As a result of a focussed effort to increase enforcement activity £49.4 million was paid through the Collect & Pay service in the quarter ending September 2022 compared to £47.4. million in the quarter ending September 2021.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables – table 5 'Money Due and Paid each quarter' January 2015 to September 2022).*

There has been a consistent downward trend in the proportion of unpaid maintenance as a proportion of maintenance arranged since 2017, falling from 12.5% in 2017 to 8.2% in September 2022.

*(Source – Child Maintenance Service published Statistics : National Tables - table 6 'how much maintenance CMS has arranged March 2015 to September 2022).*

## ■ Citizens Advice: Contracts

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[147224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department's Help to Claim contract with Citizen's Advice contains clauses preventing Citizen's Advice from bringing his Department into disrepute.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Help to Claim Grant Funding Agreement is based on a Model Grant Funding Agreement that uses standard provisions that allow exit from the Grant Funding Agreement if the grant recipient takes any actions which unfairly bring, or are likely to unfairly bring, the Department or its name or reputation into disrepute.

## ■ Cost of Living Payments

**Nadia Whittome:**

[\[151439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has plans to extend the eligibility criteria for the Cost of Living payment to include people who are self-employed on low incomes and receive a nil Universal Credit award.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government recognises the importance of self-employment to the economy, and believes it is right that, once people are in work, they should become more financially

independent and less reliant on benefits. The Minimum Income Floor encourages self-employed UC claimants to progress in work and increase their earnings through developing their business. It also limits state support for those who persistently declare very low self-employed earnings - a situation which is unsustainable and unfair on the taxpayer, and a poor outcome for claimants.

We have kept the eligibility rules for the Cost of Living Payments as simple as possible to deliver them promptly and accurately.

The cost of living payment for eligible means-tested benefit claimants will however be delivered in three separate payments over 2023/24. This reduces the chance of someone missing out altogether as those who do not qualify for one of the payments due to their changing circumstances, may qualify for another one of the payments.

For those who require additional support the Government is providing £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable a further extension to the Household Support Fund in England. In England, this will run from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, backed by £842m. Local Authorities use the Fund to help households with the cost of essentials, and they are expected to help households in the most need, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support the government has recently made available. The guidance can be found here: [1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

## ■ Cost of Living: Finance

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[149474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he will open an alternative fund for people who are not eligible for 2023-2024 cost of living payments due to receiving no Universal Credit in one particular month due to fluctuating income.

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[149475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to open an alternative cost-of-living fund for people who are eligible for Universal Credit but are sanctioned during the month in question and receive nil award.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and is taking action to help through the Cost of Living Payments and through a wider package of support.

We will be delivering the up to £900 cost of living payment for eligible means-tested benefit claimants in three separate payments over 2023/24, which reduces the chance of households with fluctuating incomes missing out altogether. The first payment of £301 will be made from spring 2023, the second payment of £300 from

autumn 2023 and the third payment of £299 from spring 2024. Individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment in summer 2023.

Sanctions on UC only apply if claimants fail to meet their agreed requirements without good reason or refuse to take up or stay in employment without good reason. The majority of sanctions can be resolved quickly by claimants rebooking and attending their next appointment. We have a well-established system of hardship payments, available as a safeguard if a claimant demonstrates that they cannot meet their immediate and most essential needs as a result of a sanction. People who are receiving a hardship payment would also qualify for a Cost of Living Payment.

For those who require additional support the Government is providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable a further extension to the Household Support Fund in England. In England, this will run from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, backed by £842m. Local Authorities use the Fund to help households with the cost of essentials, and they are expected to help households in the most need, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support the government has recently made available. The guidance makes specific reference to people with fluctuating incomes. It can be found here: [1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024-household-support-fund-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england).

It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Disability

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [150533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps they have taken to operate a disability confident scheme for those seeking promotion in their Department; and how many and what proportion of those candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under the scheme were (a) interviewed and (b) promoted in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 27 February 2023]:* In line with the commitment made in the Civil Service Workforce Plan all DWP recruitment has been 'External by Default' since August 2020. It is therefore departmental policy that all permanent vacancies, including those that would result in promotion for an existing employee, are advertised externally unless there is clear rationale for not doing so.

To comply with CS Commission Recruitment Principles, our external recruitment is Fair, Open and Merit based and as a Disability Confident Leader all our advertised campaigns, internal or external, carries the Disability Confident Logo to make this clear to applicants. We are committed to offering an interview to any disabled candidate, internal or external, who applies under the Disability Confident Scheme and meets the minimum criteria for the role.

It is only within internal recruitment exercises, where candidates are asked if they are applying on promotion, as such, we only hold data on promotion figures for internally advertised campaigns.

The figures in the table show the number of DWP candidates who declared themselves as having a disability, or who applied for internal vacancies under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, and their progression through the recruitment process.

#### INTERNAL RECRUITMENT

##### CAMPAIGNS ONLY (APPLYING ON PROMOTION) \*\*

	2021	2022
Applications received from DWP candidates who <b>declared</b> themselves as having a disability, <b>or</b> who applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme.	152	244
Number of the above candidates who were successful at sift stage and invited to interview.	28 (18.4%)	37 (15.2%)
Number of the above candidates who were successful at interview stage and made an offer.	9 (5.9%)	6 (2.5%)

. \*\* Applications made by internal DWP candidates for internally advertised DWP / Cross Government vacancies, on promotion.

**Chris Stephens:**

[R] [\[151320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme where (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP is a Disability Confident Leader and all our campaigns advertised on Civil Service Jobs, externally or across the Civil Service, carry the Disability Confident Logo. We are committed to offering an interview to any disabled candidate, internal or external, who applies for these campaigns under the Disability Confident Scheme and meets the minimum criteria for the role.



To respond to changing resourcing requirements, and enable career development moves, DWP does provide opportunities for its employees to move internally on a lateral basis across the department where appropriate before advertising vacancies on CS Jobs. Advertising internal opportunities to move laterally is not mandatory but where these opportunities are advertised, we operate the Disability Confident Scheme which enables eligible candidates that apply under the scheme to progress to the interview stage if they meet the minimum requirements for the role. As most internal opportunities are advertised locally, using manual processes rather than CS Jobs, we are only able to provide limited numerical data.

The table below shows the number of DWP candidates applying for internal or Cross Government roles advertised on CS Jobs who have declared themselves as having a disability, or who applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme. We cannot identify who is applying on a level move, just those who have replied 'no' to the question 'are you applying on promotion'. This may include a very small number of people who have applied for a role at a lower grade, though this is extremely rare.

#### INTERNAL RECRUITMENT

CAMPAIGNS ONLY *	2021	2022
Applications received from DWP candidates who <b>declared</b> themselves as having a disability, <b>or</b> who applied under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme.	95	256
Number of the above candidates who were successful at sift stage and invited to interview.	19 (20.0%)	71 (27.7%)
Number of the above candidates who were successful at interview stage and made an offer.	12 (12.6%)	Redacted **

. \* Applications made by internal DWP candidates for internally advertised DWP / Cross Government vacancies advertised on CS Jobs. Please note we cannot identify who is applying on a lateral move, just those who have replied 'no' to the question 'are you applying on promotion'. This may include a very small number of people who have applied for a role at a lower grade, though this is extremely rare. \*\* Numbers are low and have been redacted to prevent the risk of individuals being identified.



## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Minimum Wage

**Justin Madders:**

[150519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has contracted work to a business named in round 18 of the National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme in the last three years.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 27 February 2023]:* We have checked our contracts database and can confirm that the Department for Work and Pensions has not contracted work to any business named in round 18 of the National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme in the last three years.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Publications

**David Linden:**

[147467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason his Department has not published online versions of its Touchbase newsletter since March 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

The Touchbase newsletter was previously published online monthly as well as being shared by email to those who had subscribed for updates.

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, a decision was made to create a weekly version of the email. Digital resources were focussed on updating online guidance available for everyone. The online version was no longer published to avoid any confusion with historical versions giving out of date messages.

The weekly email version of Touchbase still continues and anyone can subscribe to these updates. [Touchbase editions after March 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/touchbase-editions-after-march-2020)

## ■ Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[151298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made a recent estimate of the number of people claiming (a) Employment and Support Allowance or (b) Universal Credit with the Limited Capability for Work element who would return to work if they could continue claiming those benefits while in employment.

**Tom Pursglove:**

No estimate has been made.

Permitted work rules in ESA enable those with a disability, illness, or health condition, to work up to 16 hours per week and earn up to £152 (increasing to £167 in April), while having the security of keeping their benefits payments and National Insurance credits.

In Universal Credit, households with limited capability for work are entitled to a work allowance, meaning many claimants will be able to earn over £570 each month

before their Universal Credit begins to be reduced. This will increase to more than £630 per month from this April.

## ■ Employment Schemes

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[151297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of employment support available to people who are economically inactive.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Prime Minister has tasked the Secretary of State to look in detail at the issue of workforce participation. The Department is working across government to identify and help address the causes of economic inactivity.

## ■ Employment: Age

**Julian Knight:** [\[148671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to promote age-inclusive working practices.

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP engages with employers to encourage positive attitudes towards older workers and the benefits of a multi-generational workforce, and the adoption of suitable work practices to increase the retention, retraining and recruitment of older workers.

The Business Champion for Older Workers, Andy Briggs, helps the government's efforts to engage with employers and business to promote the benefits of employing and retaining older workers in England. He co-chairs, with the Minister for Employment, a regular roundtable with key employer organisations.

The DWP has signed the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a nationwide programme run by the Centre for Ageing Better to promote age inclusive working practices. We have also pioneered 50+ Champions across the UK.

## ■ Flexible Support Fund: Universal Credit

**Stella Creasy:** [\[151284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made for the Flexible Support Fund in Universal Credit Full Service in each of the last five years; how many of those applications have been granted; how much funding has been applied for in those years; and how much funding was awarded for childcare in that period between commencing employment and first receipt of wages.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Flexible Support Fund (FSF) is a discretionary fund and awards are made based on Work Coach assessment of customer needs rather than applications.

## ■ Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) retain and (b) replace the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 (S.I.1981/917); and what plans his Department has to discuss those Regulations with industry.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) retain and (b) replace the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 (S.I.1996/341); and what plans his Department has to discuss those Regulations with industry.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) retain and (b) replace the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (S.I.1999/3242) ); and what plans his Department has to discuss those Regulations with industry.

**Justin Madders:**

[\[148654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) retain and (b) replace the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (S.I.1992/2966); and what plans his Department has to discuss those Regulations with industry.

**Mims Davies:**

With the introduction of the Retained EU Law (REUL) Bill, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) remains focused on ensuring that regulatory frameworks maintain the United Kingdom's high standards of health and safety protection and continue to reduce burdens for business. HSE's approach aligns closely with the Government's pledge to do more for business to help promote growth by removing disproportionate burdens and simplifying the regulatory landscape. Our standards of health and safety protections are among the highest in the world.

HSE will continue to review its retained EU Law to seek opportunities to reduce business burdens and promote growth without reducing health and safety standards. HSE will engage with stakeholders as appropriate.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Uprating

**Darren Jones:**

[\[149594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of uplifting the benefits cap in line with inflation.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Secretary of State reviewed the benefit cap levels and decided they should be increased in line with CPI in the year to September 2022 (10.1%) in April 2023.

**■ Universal Credit****Jonathan Ashworth:****[151294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number of Universal Credit claimants who would be moved into the intensive work search group if the administrative earnings threshold is increased to the equivalent of an individual working (a) 15, (b) 16, (c) 17 and (d) 18 hours per week at the national living wage.

**Guy Opperman:**

Departmental analysts have estimated that increasing the AET to the equivalent of 15 hours at National Living Wage (and the equivalent 24 hours at National Living Wage for a couple) will bring over 120,000 claimants into the Intensive Work Search regime.

**Jonathan Ashworth:****[151295]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate he has made of the number of women with children who are not in work and (a) claim Universal Credit and (b) live with someone who claims Universal Credit.

**Guy Opperman:**

In November 2022 there were 350,000 women with children who were not in work, in receipt of Universal Credit and living with someone else who is entitled to Universal Credit.

**Notes:**

1. A couple is defined where entitlement to UC standard allowance is higher than the maximum entitlement for a single person
2. This total will exclude any couples with children awarded a single person's standard allowance due to their partner being ineligible for Universal Credit
3. For UC households of two women and at least one child where neither of the women are working, the total shown in this response includes two women (i.e. each woman in this household type is counted separately).
4. On UC is defined as in receipt of UC and in payment on the November 2022 count date.
5. Employment status is based on whether earnings were recorded within an individual's completed Universal Credit assessment period closest to the November 2022 count date and includes employed earnings only. Therefore, figure shown will include individuals who had no earnings and will also include individuals who were self-employed only.
6. This figure has been rounded to the nearest 10,000

## ■ Universal Credit: Childcare

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[151296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of paying Universal Credit childcare costs directly to childcare providers.

**Mims Davies:**

There are currently no plans for such an assessment as paying childcare costs directly to childcare providers could undermine a key principle of the design of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit is designed to reflect the world of work and is paid as a monthly lump sum. The aim is for households to make their decisions in the same way as those in working households who are not on benefits, including decisions on things such as hours of work, spending and childcare.

The majority of claimants can, and do, manage their childcare payments effectively.

## ■ Universal Credit: EU Nationals

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

[\[146755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many decisions on Universal Credit habitual residence tests for EU citizens were made in the period between (a) 14 November 2022 to 13 December 2022 and (b) 14 December 2022 to 13 January 2023; and how many and what proportion of these were positive decisions.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department does not have this information. Habitual Residence Test data is retrospectively updated and currently only available to November 2022.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ Marine Protection Update

**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**  
**[[HCWS585](#)]**

I am announcing my intention to designate the first Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) – North East of Farnes Deep, Allonby Bay and Dolphin Head. These will contribute to the government's vision under our UK Marine Strategy for 'clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse ocean and seas'. They will increase the scope and protection of protected areas at sea and will allow sites to fully recover, increasing resilience to climate change. This forms part of our commitment to deliver 30by30 under the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Between 6 July and 28 September 2022 my department led a public consultation on five candidate HPMAs. The sites included two inshore: Allonby Bay (located in the Irish Sea) and Lindisfarne (Northern North Sea). The other three were offshore: North East of Farnes Deep (Northern North Sea), Inner Silver Pit South (Southern North Sea) and Dolphin Head (Eastern Channel).

Over 900 responses to the consultation were received, and after carefully considering these and further evidence, including economic impacts, I will proceed with designating North East of Farnes Deep as set out in the consultation. For Allonby Bay and Dolphin Head, I will designate modified areas.

I will not designate Lindisfarne, owing to the impacts on the local community raised during the consultation, nor Inner Silver Pit South, owing to the high costs to fishers identified during the impact analysis.

The revised Allonby Bay HPMA boundary allows for an area of recreational angling, including access for disabled anglers, and for other activities to continue due to its importance to the community and takes account of the needs of Maryport Harbour and the Port of Silloth while still delivering important biodiversity benefits. The revised boundary for Dolphin Head is to improve compliance and enforcement. The new boundary still provides high ecological benefits, whilst straightening the western most point of the site boundary.

These HPMAs will be designated as Marine Conservation Zones under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 by 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

I have asked officials to explore additional sites for consideration this year.

The Government Response will be available on gov.uk.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ England Rare Diseases Action Plan 2023

**Minister of State (Minister for Social Care) (Helen Whately):**

[\[HCWS586\]](#)

The Government has published England's second Rare Diseases Action Plan today, on international Rare Disease Day.

Approximately 3.5 million people in the UK are living with one of over 7,000 rare diseases, such as muscular dystrophies or Huntington's disease. People living with rare diseases often face complex journeys to diagnosis, treatment and care.

Our Action Plan is part of our continued commitment to improve the lives of those living with rare conditions, as outlined in the 2021 UK Rare Diseases Framework. It follows publication of England's first Rare Diseases Action Plan in February 2022, and highlights progress made in the past year, as well as setting out 13 new actions for the year ahead.

Key achievements in the last year include:

- changes to the UK National Screening Committee to support robust decision making within the constraints of more limited evidence bases, to help improve how decisions are made on newborn screening for rare diseases;
- extensive public engagement to support design of a whole genome sequencing research study embedded in the NHS to screen for up to 200 rare genetic conditions in newborns where early intervention could transform outcomes;
- identification of over 1,000 new, complex diagnoses for people with rare diseases, via the Genomics England Clinical Research Interface, to inform the most appropriate clinical care;
- expansion of innovative digital educational resources on rare diseases, which have had strong uptake by healthcare professionals;
- creation and rollout of a toolkit for virtual healthcare consultations, to improve care coordination for patients with complex, multi-system rare diseases;
- recruitment of over 2,500 new volunteers to the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) BioResource, to increase scientific understanding of rare diseases and facilitate improved diagnostics and treatments;
- completion of innovative research studies, such as the MELODY Covid-19 study, to inform targeted treatment policies for the rare diseases community.

Our second Action Plan will continue to build on this record, adding significant new commitments against each of the Framework priorities, developed in close collaboration with members of the rare disease community. These include:

- addressing health inequalities for people living with rare diseases by gathering the evidence needed to include rare diseases in NHS England's Core20PLUS5 Framework, enabling Integrated Care Systems to develop targeted actions to reduce these inequalities;

- changes to commissioning of services for rare diseases within NHS England, to improve coordination of pathways for access to specialist care, treatment, drugs, social care, mental health and special educational support for those living with rare diseases;
- seeking feedback from the rare disease community on how to improve NIHR's Be Part of Research platform, to make it easier for people living with rare diseases to participate in clinical research.

These actions are supported by recently announced government funding for ground-breaking research, including investment of nearly £790 million in 20 NIHR Biomedical Research Centres, and £12 million of funding to support the Medical Research Council (MRC)-NIHR UK Rare Disease Research Platform. This research forms the essential foundations to improve understanding, diagnoses and treatments of rare diseases, translating scientific breakthroughs into clinical advances.

Under the Action Plan, the millions of people with rare diseases in England will see more efficient and equitable access to care and new treatments introduced. Over the coming year, we will closely monitor the progress of these actions, seeking input from those living with rare diseases to ensure we are measuring the outcomes that matter most. Progress will be reported in 2024, as part of England's commitment to report annually over the 5-year lifetime of the UK Rare Diseases Framework.

Through this second action plan, we will continue to take steps towards achieving our overarching vision – delivering improvements in diagnosis, awareness, treatment and care, and creating lasting positive change for those living with rare diseases.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Consultation on a small payments scheme for the Mental Capacity Act 2005

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice (Mike Freer):** [\[HCWS588\]](#)

'Today I am publishing the government's response to the consultation on a small payments scheme for the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) is a crucial piece of legislation that protects vulnerable individuals who may be unable to make decisions for themselves. The principles of the MCA guide us in empowering these individuals to make their own decisions when possible and supports their families and carers to make decisions in their best interest when necessary.

It is a long-held principle that an adult must have proper legal authority to access or deal with property belonging to another adult. In cases where the adult lacks mental capacity, the MCA provides the framework for them to grant legal authority by appointing a lasting power of attorney (LPA) while they still have mental capacity, or for third parties to obtain legal authority through applications to the Court of Protection (CoP).

Concerns have been raised that the existing CoP process for obtaining legal authority to access accounts on behalf of individuals who lack mental capacity creates barriers to



access small value assets. This has particularly been highlighted in the case of accessing matured Child Trusts Funds, where a campaign by the families of young adults with learning disabilities has led to attention in both the Lords and Commons

In response to these concerns, Government decided to examine whether there was a case for an alternative process to the current CoP deputyship where access to small funds was required. We consulted on a small payment scheme that would be run by financial services firms and permit access for six months to limited funds up to £2500 from one account belonging to an individual who lacks mental capacity without an order from the CoP being sought. The scheme set out to meet three aims:

1. Scope: The scheme must be broad enough to be useful and avoid inadvertent discrimination
2. Security: Assets of vulnerable individuals should not be subject to unacceptable financial risk; and
3. Simplicity: The scheme must be straightforward and allow quicker access to limited funds than current processes, whilst being easy for financial service firms to implement.

The consultation received 225 responses and provided the opportunity for key stakeholders from the financial, legal and disability sectors as well as parents and carers supporting those who lack mental capacity to share their concerns about the current system and opinions on the new proposal.

The consultation provided clear evidence of the challenges faced in the current system. Most consistently respondents complained of the lengthy and complex CoP application forms, and the time taken to complete the application. It has also become apparent through the consultation that there is a general lack of awareness of the MCA. In many cases families and carers are often caught off guard when their child turns 18 as they were not aware of the MCA and the need to obtain legal authority to manage another person's financial affairs if they lack capacity.

I want to make it simpler and quicker for the people who care for individuals who lack mental capacity to access the funds on their behalf. The evidence demonstrates that legislating for a small payments scheme would fail to address the underlying challenges preventing access to small value assets. Instead, the best approach is to focus on addressing the underlying barriers in the current system to accessing small value assets. To do this, the government will work with the Court of Protection to improve application processing times and simplify court forms, and collaborate with OGDs, charities, and the finance sector to increase awareness of the MCA among parents and caregivers of young people without capacity as they transition to adulthood.

Importantly, this approach will also maintain protections and support for vulnerable people and their rights. The steps outlined uphold the principles of the MCA to empower individuals without mental capacity to make their own property and affairs decisions when possible and support their families and caregivers to make decisions in their best interest

when necessary. This is essential for protecting vulnerable individuals from fraud, abuse, and coercion.

I hope the publication of this response will demonstrate the thorough consideration given to this issue and the impact on those individuals who lack capacity. As my predecessor Minister Pursglove said when launching the consultation, these individuals must come first and should not lose the protections provided by the MCA. It is my belief that this response rightly honours that.'

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Consultation Update

**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove):** [\[HCWS587\]](#)

Today I have launched two formal consultations on proposals to improve the planning system to support measures in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

#### PLANNING FEES

Planning application fees provide essential income for local planning authorities to be able to deliver their planning service.

This consultation seeks views on proposals to increase planning fees by 35 per cent for major applications and 25 per cent for all other applications, including proposals for fees indexation, to support greater resourcing and financial sustainability for local planning authorities. The consultation also seeks views on how the Government can provide additional support for building capacity and capability in local planning authorities.

All applicants should be able to benefit from a high-quality and timely planning service, so the consultation also asks for views on new performance measures.

This consultation closes on 25 April 2023.

#### PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

National permitted development rights play an important role in the planning system, providing flexibility and reducing bureaucracy. This consultation asks for views on a new permitted development right for temporary recreational campsites and changes to existing rights to further support film-making and local authority-led electric vehicle charge points.

In addition, and as committed to in the Government's British Energy Security Strategy, this consultation seeks views on changes to the existing rights for solar equipment. As part of this, we are also proposing a new right to allow for the installation of solar canopies in ground-level off-street car parks in non-domestic settings.

This consultation closes on 25 April 2023.

A copy of both documents will be deposited in the Library of both Houses.