



Daily Report

Tuesday, 14 March 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:40 P.M., 14 March 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[161291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to help promote drinks produced by distilleries in Northern Ireland.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business & Trade provides bespoke export advice and support available to distilleries in Northern Ireland through dedicated resource in the Northern Ireland team.

The Department has a dedicated workplan of export promotion activities including a strong UK presence at tradeshow such as Prowein in Germany this month, webinars through the UK Export Academy and inward buyer visits.

We work in close partnership with trade associations such as the Irish Whiskey Association to help whiskey exporters capitalise on the global demand for UK food and drink whilst we work to open new markets for their products.

■ Central Africa: Arms Trade

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[158853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies on the supply of arms to countries in Central Africa of reports on the activities of the March 23 Movement.

Nigel Huddleston:

[Holding answer 9 March 2023]: HM Government takes its arms export responsibilities very seriously and rigorously assesses every export licence application on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. These Criteria are one of the means by which we implement a range of international legal commitments including United Nations sanctions.

HM Government will not grant a licence for items where we determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate internal repression, or where we determine there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law. We also do not license items where we determine there is a clear risk that the items would, overall, undermine peace and security, including internal peace and security.

Licensing decisions are based on the most up-to-date information and analysis available at the time and all licences are kept under careful and continual review as standard.

The UK condemns recent atrocities committed by armed group March 23 Movement (M23) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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

Sarah Olney: [151358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, 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.

Nigel Huddleston:

Due to the Machinery of Government changes we are unable to give total figures for the Department of Business and Trade.

The number of domestic flights (flights departing and arriving within the United Kingdom) taken by officials of the former Department of International Trade (DIT) in each of the last 5 financial years is published in the department's Annual Report and Accounts.

The link to the DIT Annual Report and Accounts can be found at the following location: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-international-trade-annual-report-and-accounts>

■ **Department for International Trade: Expenditure**

Gareth Thomas: [160114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £27,419.65 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 30 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [160129]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £209,554.8 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 19 October 2022, transaction reference number 468304.

Gareth Thomas: [160130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £26,951.44 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 19 October 2022, transaction reference number 468306.

Gareth Thomas: [160131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what

purpose that Department spent £59,944.49 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 19 October 2022, transaction reference number 468307.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £29,622.84 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 19 October 2022, transaction reference number 468330.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £26,083.09 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 19 October 2022, transaction reference number 468355.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £85,207.73 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 30 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £38,203.45 on marketing and media with Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 21 October 2022, transaction reference 468598.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £191,226.09 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 28 October 2022, transaction reference number 469829.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose the department spent £297,478.57 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 21 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £209,900.56 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 23 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £26,972.46 on marketing and media at Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd T/A Manning Gottlieb OMD on 28 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade has contracts with Manning Gottlieb OMD to provide media buying services to support our export and investment promotion, as part of the GREAT Britain campaign, both in the UK and internationally.

All the payments listed are for such media buying services. Paid marketing campaigns require the purchase of media space in regional, national and international channels.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose the department spent £43,145 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 6 September 2022, transaction reference number 461258.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £1,064,546.29 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 7 September 2022, transaction reference 459225.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £30,000 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 8 September 2022, transaction reference 461777.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £53,657.52 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 12 September 2022, transaction reference 461637.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £35,340 on marketing and media with Bray Leino Limited on 23 September 2022, transaction reference 463450.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £25,250 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference number 463270.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £30,250 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference 463269.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £142,750 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference number 463267.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £17,250 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference number 463266.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £30,000 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 20 October 2022, transaction reference number 466396.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £31,598.8 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference number 463265.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what

purpose the department spent £48,092.09 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 27 September 2022, transaction reference number 464291.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose the department spent £23,1000 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 12 October 2022, transaction reference number 466887.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose the department spent £632,645.27 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 4 October 2022, transaction reference number 465202.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £25,945 on marketing and media at Bray Leino Limited on 7 October 2022, transaction reference number 464722.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £28,509 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 10 October 2022, transaction reference 466453.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £20,886.19 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 21 October 2022, transaction reference 468609.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £31,250 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 27 October 2022, transaction reference 463951.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £311,912.67 on corporate event management and

marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 31 October 2022, transaction reference number 469800.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £282,188.23 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 31 October 2022, transaction reference number 469794.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £3,995 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 1 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £112,980 on marketing and media at Bray Leino Limited on 1 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £33,605.21 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 3 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £415,000 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 8 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £30,000 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 8 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £31,206.16 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 8 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £61,442.02 on corporate event management and marketing with Bray Leino Limited on 8 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £20,898.43 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 8 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £37,017.19 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 9 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £35,250 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 9 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £12,945 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 10 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £12,945 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 16 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £14,881.32 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 22 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas: [\[160169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what

purpose that Department spent £11,312 on corporate event management and marketing at Bray Leino Limited on 22 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The charges referenced all relate to event management services and third-party costs for Bray Leino, who deliver events on behalf of the Department for Business and Trade, which in 2022 included the Arab Health, Gulfood, Mobile World Congress, Web Summit, UK House at Commonwealth Games, NHS Trade Mission to Saudi Arabia, Green Trade, and Investment Summit, COP27, SMM Hamburg and NHS Trade Mission to World Hospital Congress.

Gareth Thomas:

[160120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for September 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £61,360.91 on corporate event management and marketing with PS8 LTD on 14 September 2022, transaction reference 459732.

Nigel Huddleston:

The spend of £61,360.91 paid for a Department for International Trade stand and GREAT advertising at the UK pavilion at the SIAL (Salon International de l'Alimentation) 2022 trade show in Paris.

The stand enabled UK food and drink companies to identify new export opportunities and showcase their products to global buyers. It also upskilled SMEs on export support services, while promoting the Government's growth agenda. This is just one of the Department for Business and Trade's compelling programme of trade support activity that encourages UK food and drink businesses to unlock international opportunities.

Gareth Thomas:

[160138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022,, for what purpose that Department spent £32,221.37 on corporate event management and marketing at Mace Consult Ltd on 5 October 2022, transaction reference number 465448.

Gareth Thomas:

[160171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £30,399.43 on corporate event management and marketing at Mace Consult Ltd on 23 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:

[160172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £37,687.2 on corporate event management and marketing at Mace Consult Ltd on 23 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

All three transactions relate to Project Management and Cost Control Services provided by Mace Consult Ltd for decommissioning activities relating to the UK Pavilion after the Expo 2020 Dubai.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £35,144.97 on marketing and media with M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 20 October 2022, transaction reference 465987.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £64,311.75 on marketing and media at M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 15 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department twice spent £20,200 on marketing and media at M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 17 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022 for what purpose that Department spent £45,643.49 on marketing and media at M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 21 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £69,104.2 on marketing and media at M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 24 November 2022.

Gareth Thomas:[\[160175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £25,361.1 on marketing and media at M&C Saatchi (UK) Ltd on 29 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade has contracts with M&C Saatchi to provide creative development services to support our export and investment promotion, as part of the GREAT Britain campaign, both in the UK and internationally.

All the payments listed are for such creative development services. Paid marketing campaigns require the purchase of creative development to allow advertising and associated marketing assets to be created.

Gareth Thomas:

[160147]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for October 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £35,854.49 on corporate event management and marketing at Identity Holdings Ltd on 28 October 2022, transaction reference number 469825.

Nigel Huddleston:

The charge referenced in the question relates to event management services and third-party costs that Identity Holdings incurred in delivering Singapore Fintech Week on behalf of the former Department for International Trade in 2022.

Gareth Thomas:

[160162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose that Department spent £46,446.31 on corporate event management and marketing at PT Napindo Media Ashatama on 17 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The expenditure was for 72m² of bare exhibition space at the Indo Defence 2022 exhibition in Indonesia in November 2022 for the UK Defence and Security Exports stand.

Gareth Thomas:

[160176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what purpose her Department spent £28,000 on corporate event management and marketing at the British Fashion Council on 29 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade supported the British Fashion Council's (BFC) international designer initiative 'London Show Rooms', which takes London's leading emerging fashion talents to Paris, to maximise export potential for creative businesses at the primary industry trade event. It provides a unique opportunity for the British designers to promote themselves to a global buying audience outside London. The pop-up showroom is a strategic element of the BFC's support and mentoring scheme; and is a space for designers to sell their collections and grow their export business with the support of international marketing, media and sales advisers.

Gareth Thomas:

[160177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Government transparency data entitled DIT: spending over £25,000 for November 2022, for what

purpose that Department spent £33,000 on corporate event management and marketing at the British Fashion Council on 29 November 2022.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade provided funding to the British Fashion Council (BFC) to support the International Guest Programme during London Fashion Week trade event, targeting international buyers and media to boost export sales for British designers, via digital content and across multiple events. The programme is designed to stimulate international business for British designers and international attendance at London Fashion Week, maintaining the position of the UK as the destination for innovation and creativity, and enables the BFC to create a strategic and tailored programme for influential and relevant buyers and media to maximise export potential for UK designer businesses.

■ **Import Duties: Coffee**

Julian Knight:

[158962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the 8 per cent tariff placed on processed coffee following the UK's exit from the EU.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK Global Tariff (UKGT) sets out the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariffs. It applies when exceptions, such as preferential treatment under a Free Trade Agreement or the Generalised Scheme of Preferences, do not apply.

The UKGT has been in place since 1 January 2021. In designing the UKGT, the Government balanced the interests of consumers and producers, as well as the UK's strategic trade ambitions. We continue to monitor its impacts and welcome feedback.

Businesses can provide feedback on specific UK Global Tariff rates or evidence on the tariff in general, using the UKGT feedback form, which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tariffs-on-goods-imported-into-the-uk>.

■ **Industrial Disputes**

David Warburton:

[149592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps the Government is taking to (a) minimise disruption caused by industrial action and (b) reach a compromise on outstanding industrial issues.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government's door always remains open. We continue to talk to unions but any settlements must be affordable and not stoke higher inflation.

The Government continues to put contingency plans in place to mitigate the impact of industrial action in the public sector. To help reduce disruption caused by strikes, we lifted in July last year the ban on agency workers being used during industrial disputes. We have also recently introduced in Parliament the Strikes (Minimum

Service Levels) Bill to ensure that a minimum service is provided in a range of important public services when industrial action takes place in future.

■ Land: Registration

Andrew Selous: [158819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether any penalties apply for failure to register land holdings with HM Land Registry.

Andrew Selous: [158820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to introduce penalties for failure to register land holdings with HM Land Registry; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Hollinrake:

HM Land Registry does not hold enforcement powers to impose penalties for failing to register land holdings and this department has no plans to introduce such penalties. However, there are consequences for failing to register land which can impact the landowner's ability to deal with the land.

For unregistered land, transactions such as transfers, leases or mortgages trigger compulsory first registration. Failure to apply for first registration within two months means that the transaction does not take effect at law.

For registered land, the transactions referred to above do not take effect at law until they are completed by registration.

■ Maternity Leave

Angela Rayner: [158952]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what the (a) mean and (b) median number of weeks of maternity leave taken by new mothers is; and what proportion of new mothers take (i) 1-25 weeks, (ii) 26 weeks, (iii) 27-38 weeks, (iv) 39 weeks, (v) 40-51 weeks, (vi) 52 weeks and (vii) 53 weeks or more of maternity leave.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department for Business and Trade does not routinely collect data on the length of maternity leave taken by mothers. However, in order to gather information among parents on how parental entitlements, including Maternity Leave, are used in practice, the Government commissioned the Parental Rights Survey as part of the Shared Parental Leave (SPL) evaluation.

We intend to publish the SPL evaluation and underpinning research, which includes information on the duration of Statutory Maternity Leave, in due course. Findings from the previous Maternity and Paternity Rights Survey are available here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maternity-and-paternity-rights-and-women-returns-survey-200910-rr777>

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:**[\[158807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of (a) 8 November 2022, (b) 14 December 2022, (c) 11 January 2023 and (d) 20 February 2023 relating to a constituent with case reference JB38051.

Nigel Huddleston:

My hon. Friend, Kevin Hollinrake MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business and Trade, wrote to you on 8 March in response to your letter relating to a constituent with case reference JB38051.

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**Dame Nia Griffith:**[\[158852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what support her Department has provided in the last three months to increase exports in the British automotive industry.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade is working across Whitehall and with industry to secure export led investment in the transition to zero-emission vehicles.

Our trade deals will benefit automotive businesses and vehicle manufacturers across the UK by enabling new export opportunities, tariff removal, flexible rules of origin, and efficient customs procedures.

We have dedicated export support complemented by our network of International Trade Advisers. The automotive industry continues as the country's biggest single exporter of goods, exporting nearly 80% of production.

In the last three months UK Export Finance provided working capital support to three automotive manufacturing companies exporting globally: Bamford Bus; RLE International Product Development Ltd; and LSN Diffusion Ltd.

■ Post Offices: ICT**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[149455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an estimate of the number of subpostmasters who received compensation following the settlement of the civil court case on the Post Office's Horizon IT system who have sought tax advice on that compensation; and if she will make an assessment with her Cabinet colleagues of the potential financial loss that may be sustained by affected people who have not sought such advice.

Jonathan Reynolds:[\[149456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment with her Cabinet colleagues of whether the interest portion of compensation

given to subpostmasters impacted by the failure of the Post Office Horizon system is liable to tax.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is working with Post Office to ensure all victims of the Horizon IT scandal are returned to the financial position they should have been in had the wrongs not occurred.

Both Post Office and the Government want to see fair compensation for all victims and are looking at the tax issues raised so that if any unfairness is identified in individual cases, this can be addressed.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[150682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether compensation received by subpostmasters following the failure of the Post Office Horizon IT system will be treated as loss of earnings for tax purposes.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is working with Post Office to ensure all victims of the Horizon IT scandal are returned to the financial position they should have been in had the wrongs not occurred.

Both Post Office and the Government want to see fair compensation for all victims and are looking at the tax issues raised so that if any unfairness is identified in individual cases, this can be addressed.

■ **Retail Trade: Fees and Charges**

Tim Farron:

[\[158869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of retail crime on the price of goods.

Kevin Hollinrake:

No assessment has been made.

■ **Small Businesses**

Sarah Olney:

[\[147385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether it remains her Department's policy to (a) expand the definition of a Small or Medium Sized Enterprise to include companies with up to 500 employees and (b) consult on extending the threshold to businesses with up to 1,000 employees.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In October 2022, the Government extended the Small and Micro Business Assessment process to include a new test for medium sized businesses of up to 499 employees. This will help ensure that the impact of new and renewed regulations on

these businesses are considered, and exemptions or mitigations applied where it is appropriate. There are no plans to extend the threshold further.

■ **Small Businesses: Billing**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[160254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps her Department has taken to help reduce the practice of late payments being made to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Government is tackling the culture of late payments with measures including Payment Practices Reporting, the Small Business Commissioner and Prompt Payment Code.

We are currently undertaking a Payment and Cash Flow review which will set out the actions we will take to ensure we have the right approach to support businesses on payment issues.

■ **Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill**

Dan Carden:

[\[153974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the opinion of the Regulatory Policy Committee on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Our legislation is sensible and proportionate and is designed to protect lives and livelihoods.

The Department is grateful for the Regulatory Policy Committee's feedback on the Impact Assessment and is currently taking their opinion into consideration.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[158992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the Regulatory Policy Committee's red rating of the Government's impact assessment for the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Our legislation is sensible and proportionate and is designed to protect lives and livelihoods.

The Department is grateful for the Regulatory Policy Committee's feedback on the Impact Assessment and is currently taking their opinion into consideration, particularly the assessment of the impacts of the Bill on small and micro businesses - the only red-rated aspect of the analysis.

As stated previously, individual impact assessments will accompany consultations on the specific minimum service level for each relevant service which will be better able to assess the impacts on SMEs.

■ Supply Chains

Bill Esterson:

[\[161278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Make UK report entitled No Weak links: Building Supply Chain Resilience, published on 7 March 2023, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of that report's finding that 48 per cent of EU suppliers are cautious about supplying UK customers.

Bill Esterson:

[\[161279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Make UK report entitled No Weak links: Building Supply Chain Resilience, published on 7 March 2023, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of that report's finding that there is a trend towards UK businesses reshoring their supply chains.

Bill Esterson:

[\[161280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Make UK report entitled No Weak links: Building Supply Chain Resilience, published on 7 March 2023, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of that report's findings that (a) one in three manufacturers are confident they will be able to meet the demand for goods and services in 2023-24 and (b) supply chain uncertainty is growing.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government is aware of the Make UK Report and its findings. Like other countries, the UK has been dealing with economic headwinds caused by a financial crisis, a pandemic and then an international energy crisis.

We recognise that there has been reported uncertainty in EU based suppliers supplying the UK. As the Prime minister has said, the Windsor Framework should be the beginning of a new chapter in our relationship with the EU as one of our key allies and trading partners. The Trade and Co-Operation agreement goes beyond traditional free trade agreements and provides a solid basis for our trading relationship. In addition, our 2025 UK Border Strategy sets out our vision to have the world's most effective border.

While we recognise the value to the UK of free trade, we recognise the value to resilience building of reshoring, where it supports supply chain diversification. The Rules of Origin in our free trade agreements, including our FTA with the EU, encourage the localisation of the supply chain, accelerating investment in through policies such as the Automotive Transformation Fund.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Ian Paisley:

[\[160273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to take steps to undertake (a) trade missions and (b) other export promotion activities to help support Irish whiskey exporters from Northern Ireland to increase sales in Australia, in the context of the UK-Australia free trade agreement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Our world-class trade agreement with Australia will bring opportunities to every part of the UK. Whiskey Distilleries from Northern Ireland will benefit from tariffs being cut to 0%, the slashing of red tape and simplified customs procedures, making it cheaper and easier to export their products to Australia.

The Department for Business and Trade works in close partnership with the Irish Whiskey Association on a range of issues. These include trade policy and export promotion activities focussing on opportunities in their target priority markets, which include Australia.

■ **Trade Promotion: Pakistan**

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[156980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Pakistan was appointed; and how many times they have visited that country since their appointment.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[156981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Thailand was appointed; and how many times they have visited that country since their appointment.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[156982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Colombia was appointed; and how many times they have visited that country since their appointment.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[156983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Albania was appointed; and how many times they have visited that country since their appointment.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Prime Minister's Trade Envoys support the UK Government's overall strategy to drive economic growth, promote UK trade and encourage inward investment. In addition to visiting their respective markets, Trade Envoys undertake a variety of activities including meeting UK companies, hosting inward delegations, and speaking engagements. Due to travel restrictions arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic, many visits to markets were disrupted and Trade Envoys had to work virtually or through other means, strengthening the relationships to support the Government's trade and investment agenda.

TRADE ENVOY	COUNTRY	APPOINTMENT DATE	NUMBER OF VISITS
Mark Eastwood MP	Pakistan	August 2021	0
Mark Garnier	Thailand	October 2020	3

TRADE ENVOY	COUNTRY	APPOINTMENT DATE	NUMBER OF VISITS
Mark Menzies	Colombia	September 2017	5
Martin Vickers	Albania	October 2020	1

■ TRIPS Agreement: Coronavirus

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[143877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which (a) industry bodies and (b) UK civil society organisations the Department for International Trade consulted with on the TRIPS waiver extension to include COVID-19 tests and treatments.

Nigel Huddleston:

Department for Business and Trade officials have discussed the potential extension of the Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) TRIPS decision with (a) the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), the BioIndustry Association (BIA), the Association of British HealthTech Industries (ABHI), the British Generic Manufacturers Association (BGMA), (b) StopAids, Médecins Sans Frontières, Just Treatment, Global Justice, Oxfam, Access 2 Healthcare, and Christian Aid. HM Government appreciates the continuous engagement from industry and civil society organisations on this matter and remains committed to engage constructively with stakeholders on discussions taking place at the World Trade Organization.

■ UK Trade with EU: International Transport

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential merits of introducing TIR carnets to support trade in goods between Great Britain and the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Both the EU and the UK are contracting parties to the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) and the Common Transit Convention (CTC). This means that traders in both the UK and the EU can choose to use the TIR or CTC process to move goods across borders using transit. Goods moving under a transit declaration do not need to undertake import and export procedures at every border.

■ Urine Drainage Bags: Import Duties

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[160303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make it her policy to remove the six per cent import duty on urine drainage bags on a permanent basis by re-classifying them as medical devices under the UK Global Tariff regime.

Nigel Huddleston:

In 2021 the Government implemented temporary tariff suspensions on a set of goods, including urine drainage bags, to support the healthcare response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has extended the majority of these suspensions until 31 December 2023.

HMRC has reviewed the classification of urine drainage bags and although these are used in conjunction with medical products (e.g. catheters), they are not considered to be medical devices. As such they are classified as articles of plastic (tariff heading 3926). This is in line with classification decisions previously issued by the World Custom Organization which member countries are expected to follow. Businesses can direct queries on classification to classification.enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk or through this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-international-trade-and-excise-enquiries>.

The Government has recently received stakeholder feedback on tariffs on urine drainage bags. We are considering the evidence provided alongside wider UK Government analysis.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme**Mr Virendra Sharma:****[162155]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March to Question 158878 on Youth Mobility Scheme, when she plans for the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement to come into force.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are working with the Australian Government to ratify the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement at the earliest opportunity so that businesses can reap the benefits. We expect to be able to bring the agreement into force in Spring 2023.

The commitments in the Youth Mobility Scheme were taken in a separate side letter which specifies that the changes will need to be implemented within two years of entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement. UK and Australian officials are working together to bring these changes into effect as soon as operationally possible.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Honours****Caroline Lucas:****[158880]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2023 to Question 151266, whether probity checks on honours lists include consideration of the avoidance of (a) a conflict of interest and (b) the perception of a conflict of interest in the conferring of an honour on a person who is closely related to the Prime Minister who has nominated them; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

As is the case under successive administrations, probity and propriety checks are carried out on all honours lists, including resignation honours lists. Checks are carried out with government departments including HMRC and relevant vetting and other professional bodies, as well as using open source information.

■ Veterans

Julian Knight:

[158972]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the (a) effectiveness and (b) efficiency of welfare services for veterans.

Johnny Mercer:

This Government is determined to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran. To ensure we meet this ambition, I have jointly commissioned an independent review into the role and scope of welfare provision for veterans, including those under the Veterans UK banner, with the Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families.

This review will focus on examining the effectiveness and efficiency of welfare services for veterans, and will identify duplication or gaps in support, ensuring that our welfare services best deliver for those who have served our country.

■ Veterans: LGBT+ People

Tommy Sheppard:

[162222]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the independent review into the service and experience of LGBT veterans who served between 1967 to 2000 will assess the reasons for which people with HIV were discharged in that period; and whether this will be assessed in the Government's response to that review.

Johnny Mercer:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the service of every veteran is understood, valued and recognised.

The Cabinet Office and MoD have therefore commissioned an independent review to look at the impact of the pre-2000 ban on LGBT personnel serving in the Armed Forces. Whilst HIV status was not explicitly part of the independent review's terms of reference, the content of the final report will be a matter for the Review. The final report is due by 25 May, and we will publish the report and the Government's response in due course thereafter.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine**

Julian Knight: [\[158958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help facilitate the attendance of displaced Ukrainians at the Eurovision Song Contest.

Stuart Andrew:

On 25 February the Government announced that around 3,000 tickets will be made available for displaced Ukrainians living in the UK to attend the Eurovision Song Contest live shows. Those who are based in the UK via the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Ukraine Extension Scheme will be able to apply for tickets. Tickets will be offered for all nine live shows and the Government will set out more detail on how people can apply in the coming weeks. This is another example of the UK's steadfast support for Ukraine.

■ **Football**

Julian Knight: [\[158959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the role of football fans in decisions on (a) the running of clubs, (b) team names, (c) badges and (d) stadia.

Julian Knight: [\[158960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to prevent football clubs from forming breakaway leagues.

Julian Knight: [\[158961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support football clubs with maintaining stable finances.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government set out its position on these three questions in the White Paper on Football Governance on 23 February 2023. The independent's regulator's core focus will be to improve the financial resilience of clubs and the long-term sustainability of the football pyramid.

The Regulator will require every club to meet a minimum standard of fan engagement. It will also ensure fans are given veto rights over certain club heritage assets, including team names and badges, and will be consulted on any stadium sale.

Football clubs will only be able to participate in competitions which are approved by the Regulator against a set of published criteria. This will prevent English clubs from joining unapproved breakaway leagues such as the European Super League.

■ Football: Sportsgrounds

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[160404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the relevant authorities take effective measures to tackle ongoing issues with large-scale pitch invasions at professional football games.

Stuart Andrew:

The safety of all players participating in football matches is a priority for the government and we are clear that pitch invasions are unacceptable.

Prior to the start of the 2022/23 football season, the Premier League and English Football League publicised that any fan entering the pitch would be banned by the club they support for a minimum period of one year. These bans could also be extended to accompanying parents or guardians of children who take part in these activities. These measures are in addition to the existing Football Banning Order regime which can be imposed by a court for a football-related offence, including entering the pitch.

In recent days I have met with the police and football authorities to review disorder at football matches and assess the measures in place to prevent large-scale pitch invasions.

■ Members: Correspondence

Janet Daby:

[\[161410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 7 December 2022 from the hon. Member for Lewisham East, case reference JD31291.

Julia Lopez:

A reply was issued on 9 March 2023.

DEFENCE

■ Airspace: Defence

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[160250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using Stratospheric unscrewed air systems.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence is sponsoring a High-Altitude Pseudo Satellite (HAPS) Operational Concept Demonstrator (OCD) through Project AETHER. Feasibility activity has been conducted since 2016 to demonstrate the utility of stratospheric aircraft. The project has conducted a range of assessment including with fixed wing aircraft and balloons. This work is now continuing under an assessment phase including further flight trials to inform the next steps for future investment.

■ Armed Forces: Health

John Healey: [\[158782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department publishes a list of conditions that make a person serving in the Armed Forces deemed medically (a) limited deployable and (b) non-deployable.

John Healey: [\[158783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department publishes a list of medical conditions that would make a person be deemed unfit for service in the Armed Forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Joint Service Publication 950 Leaflet 6-7-7 (JSP 950 Lft 6-7-7) provides a framework for the medical assessment of potential recruits and serving personnel. I attach a copy for the right hon. Member's information.

Grading, deployability and fitness to serve may be dependent on several medical conditions: an individual's final grading is determined by using the extensive content in JSP 950 Lft 6-7-7 combined with the expert judgement of occupational medicine specialists.

Attachments:

1. Joint Service Publication 950 Leaflet 6 7 7 [JSP 950 Lft 6-7- 7 JSMMF (v2.4 Oct 22).pdf]

■ Army Reserve: Crohn's Disease

John Healey: [\[158784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people with Crohn's disease have (a) applied to and (b) been rejected for the Army Reserves in each year since 2010.

John Healey: [\[158785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Army Reserves consider a person diagnosed with Crohn's disease to be unfit for service.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is not possible to extract specific medical rejection reasons, such as Crohn's disease, from the Defence Recruiting System. However, as outlined in the Joint Service Manual of Medical Fitness (JSP 950 volume 6-7-7), candidates who apply to join the Army (Regular and Reserve) with diagnosis of Crohn's disease, will be rejected.

For personnel who are already in service, medical grading relating to inflammatory bowel disease, including Crohn's disease, relates to the level of ongoing symptoms, number and frequency of recurrences, known triggers and the requirement for medication, surgery and follow-up.

■ Beachley Barracks

John Healey: [160191]

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

John Healey: [160195]

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

John Healey: [160201]

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

Alex Chalk:

This information is publicly available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1140373/Disposal_Database_House_of_Commons_Report.ods

■ Challenger Tanks

John Healey: [162116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister for the Armed Forces to the Defence Select Committee on the 8 March 2023 that the 157 of the British Army's 227 Challenger 2 tanks are available, how many Challenger 2 tanks have been available in each year since 2015.

Alex Chalk:

Since 2010, the British Army has held an active fleet of 227 Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks . The number of Challenger 2 available for deployment fluctuates depending on operational and training commitments and routine maintenance of the fleet.

■ Defence: Technology

Dr Kieran Mullan: [159090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to develop innovative defence technology.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence works closely with UK industry and academia, including Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME), to identify and invest in innovative technologies that address our most pressing capability challenges as well as publishing our future priorities to incentivise investment.

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) finds and funds exploitable ideas to support UK Defence and Security quickly and effectively. In the last financial year, DASA allocated over £30 million across more than 150 projects, of which 64% were with SMEs.

Through the Defence Innovation Fund we have invested over £200 million of our commitment to spend around £800 million over a ten-year period.

Over the four years of this Spending Review, Defence will invest over £6.6 billion in Research and Development, supporting the development of battle-winning defence technology as a response to the accelerating pace of technological change.

■ Guided Weapons: Procurement

John Healey: [\[162114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister for the Armed Forces to the Defence Select Committee on 8 March 2023 that a contract for new Starstreak missiles has been placed, how many missiles have been ordered; and when they will be delivered.

John Healey: [\[162115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister for the Armed Forces to the Defence Select Committee on 8 March 2023 that a contract for new Starstreak missiles has been placed, on what date that contract was signed.

Alex Chalk:

In order to replenish the Starstreak High Velocity Missiles (HVM) Granted in Kind to Ukraine, the Ministry of Defence placed a contract with Thales on 30 Sept 2022 to supply a number of HVM from the remaining stock held by the company. These missiles are due for delivery in 2023. The number of missiles being supplied is operationally sensitive.

A further contract was placed with Thales on 21 December 2022. A further contract was placed with Thales on 21 December 2022 to commence work on development of a new version of the HVM.

■ Imjin Barracks

John Healey: [\[158799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Imjin Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[160186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at St David's Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[160188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at St George's Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Beachley Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Duke of Gloucester Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Dalton Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Vauxhall Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Buckley Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Azimghur Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[160202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Combermere Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[161222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Victoria Barracks, Windsor; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[161224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Regent's Park Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[161226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Hyde Park Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[161228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Wellington Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[161230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Royal Artillery Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[161232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Chattenden Camp; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[161234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Lodge Hill Camp; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Brompton Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Allenby Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Battlesbury Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey: [\[162126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Horne Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[162128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Roberts Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[162130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Aliwal Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

John Healey:

[\[162132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Assaye Barracks; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Alex Chalk:

I will write to the right hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ Ministry of Defence: Consultants

Emily Thornberry:

[\[158845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) the Defence Electronics and Components Agency, (b) Defence Equipment and Support and (c) the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to (A) his Department and (B) HM Treasury.

Alex Chalk:

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and Defence Electronics and Components Agency (DECA) had no expenditure on external consultants for 2020, 2021 and 2022. Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) had the following expenditure:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONSULTANCY COST FOR DE&S (£000)
2021-22	8,449
2020-21	7,252
2019-20	8,152

The Department has not been able to determine whether any of this expenditure related to the preparation of funding bids. This information can only be obtained by reviewing each business case, which would be at disproportionate cost.

Emily Thornberry:[\[158846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) His Majesty's Naval Service, (b) the Royal Air Force and (c) the British Army in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to (A) his Department and (B) HM Treasury.

Alex Chalk:

The Department discloses its spending on external consultants in its Annual Reports and Accounts under the categories of Consultancy and Temporary Staff (copied below). The information on spending related to the preparation of funding bids is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

	TLB	FINANCIAL YEAR SPEND (£000M)				
		2020-21		2021-22		
	Consultancy	Temporary Staff	Consultancy	Temporary Staff	Consultancy	Temporary Staff
Navy	22	9,226	1,093	27,653	7,652	3,773
Army	9,986	7,414	17,177	11,561	16,008	14,296
RAF	4,746	2,892	4,979	8,070	21,548	11,254

■ Sierra Nevada Corporation

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[160252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department held has had with the Sierra Nevada Corporation in the last twelve months.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence has a close and regular dialogue with the Sierra Nevada Corporation in relation to several of the Department's programmes.

These include a High-Altitude Pseudo Satellite Operational Concept Demonstrator, for which the company has been on contact since July 2022, as part of Project AETHER.

■ St David's Barracks

John Healey:[\[160187\]](#)

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

John Healey:

[\[160189\]](#)

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

John Healey:

[\[160193\]](#)

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

John Healey:

[\[160199\]](#)

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

John Healey:

[\[160203\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

St David's Barracks is 240.5 hectares in size.

St George's Barracks (Bicester) is 422.3 hectares in size.

Duke of Gloucester Barracks is 147.9 hectares in size.

Buckley Barracks is 89.9 hectares in size.

Combermere Barracks is 9.9 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential on these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

■ USA: Espionage

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[160251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the US Covert Long Dwell Stratospheric Architecture programme.

Alex Chalk:

The Department are in regular contact with the US Department of Defense to share knowledge between projects. We do not have specific information relating to the programme requested.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Higher Education

Zarah Sultana:

[\[159039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that apprenticeship degrees are provided in Coventry.

Robert Halfon:

Employers have designed over 155 high-quality degree level apprenticeship standards to support them in developing the skilled workforces they need. There were over 43,000 starts at levels 6 and 7 in the 2021/22 academic year, which is an increase of 10.3% on the previous year. Of those, 240 apprenticeship starts at levels 6 and 7 in the 2021/22 academic year were by learners living in the Coventry local authority area. The department is working to expand these opportunities further, so that they are accessible to more people across England, including in Coventry.

The department has made £8 million available in the 2022/23 financial year to higher education (HE) institutions through the Strategic Priorities Grant, to enable them to grow degree level apprenticeship provision and form new employer partnerships. As part of this, Coventry University has been awarded over £200,000 this year to develop degree apprenticeship provision, and a further £62,000 for Level 4 and 5 provision.

All university Vice-Chancellors have been contacted with details on how the HE sector can drive forward the government's ambitious skills agenda through the expansion of degree level apprenticeships.

The department has worked with employers across the country to help them showcase higher and degree level apprenticeship vacancies. During National Apprenticeship Week, we published a listing featuring hundreds of vacancies that are available for people to apply for now, including in the West Midlands. This listing is available at: <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/app/uploads/2022/11/Higher-Degree-Listing-FEB-2023.pdf>.

In addition, the department continues to work on a programme of 'simplification', exploring ways we can remove unnecessary bureaucracy, complexity, and barriers to engagement for apprentices, employers, and providers. We recognise that universities are already subject to significant regulation, and are working with the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) and HE institutions to identify and remove barriers to universities offering more degree apprenticeship programmes.

■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Discipline**Rachael Maskell:****[159009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to ensure the appropriate use of discipline in schools for (a) children with special educational needs and disabilities and (b) other children; and what avenues of redress are open to parents if they have concerns about a school's use of discipline.

Nick Gibb:

Schools need to manage behaviour well so they can provide calm, safe and supportive environments where all pupils and staff can work in safety and are respected.

The Behaviour in Schools guidance, 2022, is inclusive of all pupils. It includes a specific section on how pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) should be supported.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines effective strategies that will encourage good behaviour and the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour. The Department trusts head teachers to develop behaviour policies which reflect their school's individual needs.

Any behaviour policy must be lawful, proportionate and reasonable and comply with the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Account must be taken of a pupil's age, any SEND, and any religious requirements affecting them.

If parents have concerns about a school, they should speak to them in the first instance. If they are still unsatisfied following this, they can raise a formal complaint by following the school's complaint procedure. If parents wish for the Department to consider the school's actions, and the school is maintained by the Local Authority, they can contact the School Complaints Unit. They can contact them via email to: customer.enquiries@education.gov.uk or through the online portal at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus>.

■ Hearing Impairment: Teachers

Sally-Ann Hart:

[159071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the SEND and alternative provision improvement plan, published on 2 March 2023, if she will take steps with relevant stakeholders to introduce an apprenticeship for roles such as teachers of the deaf before 2025 to help increase the numbers available to teach deaf children and young people.

Claire Coutinho:

As stated in the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, published 2 March 2023, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) are developing an apprenticeship for teachers of sensory impairment. They are working with universities, local authorities and sector representatives, including the National Deaf Children's Society, the Royal National Institute of Blind People and the British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People to develop the qualification. Subject to approval by IfATE, the apprenticeship will be published this year, but the department does not currently expect it to be delivered until 2025; allowing for providers to prepare the courses for delivery.

■ Higher Education: Students

Caroline Lucas:

[158882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to require the Student Loan Company to undertake data-gathering on the (a) characteristics of and (b) reasons given by students who (i) withdraw or (ii) take an intermission from university, and to

share that data with (a) universities and (b) Government agencies seeking to ensure that students do not face barriers to participation; and if she will make a statement.

Robert Halfon:

The Student Loans Company (SLC) receives notifications of student withdrawal from higher education (HE) or study intermission from providers solely in order to determine whether fee and maintenance payments should be paid. This data is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-in-year-student-withdrawal-notifications-academic-year-201819-to-202223>.

The department receives withdrawals data from the SLC for internal analysis purposes. This data identifies characteristics such as age, household income and living arrangements.

The government does not currently have plans to ask the SLC to collect other data about the withdrawal of students.

Authoritative data on students not continuing or completing their HE studies by person characteristics is published by the Office for Students in the 'Student characteristics data: Outcomes data' dashboard. This can be accessed here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/>.

■ **Languages: Education**

Julian Knight:

[158971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the quality of language lessons in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Government remains committed to increasing the proportion of pupils who choose to study a language up to GCSE and beyond, as well as to improving the quality of language teaching at both primary and secondary schools. The Department funds a number of language education programmes, with a primary aim of improving teacher and lesson quality.

On 3 March 2023, the Department announced the launch of a new Language Hubs programme, worth up to £14.9 million. Managed by the National Consortium for Languages Education, the programme seeks to improve the standards of language teaching in line with the recommendations of the Teaching Schools Council's 2016 Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) Pedagogy review. This includes the provision of continuing professional development (CPD), training, and support for language teachers nationwide, as well as improving transition between Key Stages 2 and 3.

Since 2016, the Department has funded the £10 million Mandarin Excellence Programme, which supports schools and teachers to deliver intensive Mandarin study to increase the quality of Mandarin lessons and uptake in the subject. The programme provides specially designed teacher meetings for professional

development and a forum to share ideas and best practice, as well as provision of online teaching materials and resources to enhance lessons.

The Department's £3.9 million Latin Excellence Programme, which began in September 2022, is designed to fund and support non selective schools to deliver Latin teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4. The programme provides a fully resourced, evidence based curriculum to support all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4, regardless of starting point, and regular, high quality CPD for teaching Latin in the state sector.

To ensure high standards of MFL teaching, language curriculum materials and associated resources will be developed by Oak National Academy as part of its second tranche of procurement. First materials will be available from autumn 2024, and full curriculum packages by autumn 2025. This will ensure that high quality, optional lessons are available nationwide, benefitting both teachers and pupils.

■ Millthorpe School: Discipline

Rachael Maskell:

[159008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy of the discipline approaches deployed at Millthorpe School in York and (b) impact of those approaches on the children of that school.

Nick Gibb:

The Department trusts head teachers to develop tailored behaviour policies based on the school's individual contexts and needs.

The Behaviour in Schools guidance 2022 supports schools to manage behaviour well so they can provide calm, safe and supportive environments where pupils and staff can work in safety and are respected.

If parents have concerns, they should speak to the school in the first instance. If they are still unsatisfied following this, they can raise a formal complaint by following the school's complaint procedure. If parents wish the Department to consider the school's actions, and the school is maintained by the Local Authority, they can contact the School Complaints Unit. They can contact them via email at customer.enquiries@education.gov.uk or through the online portal at:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/contactus>.

■ Schools: Physical Education and Sports

Sir Mike Penning:

[158830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Primary PE and Sport Premium Research Key findings published by the Youth Sport Trust in February 2023, what steps she is taking to help ensure that schools do not cut back on after-school sport and top-up swimming lessons from September.

Sir Mike Penning:

[158831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to enable primary schools to make effective use of PE and Sport Premium funding for 2023-24.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the School Sport and Activity Action Plan will include a long-term funding commitment for (a) the PE and Sport Premium, (b) the School Games and (c) other aspects of PE and school sport.

Nick Gibb:

On 8 March 2023, the Government announced funding to support school sport during the school day and after school, encouraging all schools to deliver a minimum of two hours of PE and sport in their timetable.

This funding announcement included confirmation that the PE and Sport Premium would continue for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, providing over £600 million to primary schools in England. The Government also confirmed £22 million of further funding for the School Games Organiser network for two years, until the 2025 summer term. The Government also confirmed up to £57 million in funding for the Opening School Facilities programme which will support increased after school sport and the provision of swimming.

To improve accountability for the PE and Sport Premium, the Department will issue updated guidance this summer to support schools to use their PE and Sport Premium funding more effectively. In addition, a new digital tool will be introduced for schools to report more easily on their use of the PE and Sport Premium.

■ Schools: Standards

Stephen Morgan:

[\[159026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to release the funding for the 24 Priority Areas for Raising School Standards.

Nick Gibb:

The Local Needs Fund will begin to be distributed during the 2022/23 academic year to fund targeted support to address local priority educational needs in each of the 24 Priority Areas.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Richard Thomson:

[\[159015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the time taken to implement the Track-2 process of carbon capture, utilisation and storage on carbon dioxide capture targets.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has been developing the process for Track 2 ensuring experience and knowledge gained from Track 1 is embedded.

Track 2 will ensure that the UK deploys four clusters by 2030 at the latest in order to meet the ambition to capture and store this 20-30Mtpa.

Richard Thomson:

[\[159020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, when he plans to publish the Track-2 timeline for the Carbon Capture Usage and Storage sequencing programme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has been developing the process for Track 2 and will set out details in the spring.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Boats**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[158801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will take steps to ensure that people who live on boats and continuously cruise and stay in different moorings have access to the Energy Bill Support Scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

In order to protect public funds against potentially fraudulent activity, the Government require applicants to show proof of address. The Government understands some households on boats not on registered moorings may not be able to provide proof of main or sole residence.

The Government is working to find an acceptable method for these households, to provide this proof so they can claim their support.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Caravans and Park Homes**

Cat Smith:

[\[158994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will expand the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding to include people whose primary residence is on a non-permanent caravan or mobile home site.

Amanda Solloway:

A requirement of the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding application process is proof of address, which is to protect public funds against fraudulent activity. The Government understands some households who are reside in a non-permanent caravan or mobile home site may not be able to provide proof that their caravan or mobile home is their main or sole residence. The Government is working to find an acceptable method for these households to provide this proof so they can claim their support.

■ **Energy: Government Assistance**

Stephen Farry:

[\[159084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the official deadline for redemption of vouchers for energy support for those households (a) for whom updated occupant details

have been necessary and (b) in new developments in Northern Ireland, beyond 31 March 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

Any voucher reissued after 31 March 2023 for customers whose vouchers have been lost or destroyed (or cancelled to update incorrect details) will have an expiry of 30 June 2023.

In regard to households in new developments, customers with a domestic electricity supply contract or a deemed contract at 08:00 on the qualifying date (2nd January 2023) will be eligible for payment under this scheme. Any household who receives a supply after this time and date will not be eligible for an EBSS AFP NI payment.

■ **Heating: Carbon Emissions**

Julian Knight:

[\[158965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help households move to low carbon heating.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is investing £6.6 billion over this Parliament on clean heat and improving energy efficiency in buildings, reducing reliance on fossil fuel heating.

Consumers can apply the grant funding of up to £6,000 through the £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme. The Government has committed £288m to Green Heat Network Fund to decarbonise heat networks.

■ **Housing: Heating**

Martyn Day:

[\[159083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the Building Research Establishment's analysis entitled Tackling cold homes would save the NHS £540 million per year, published 1 March 2023, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of that analysis and the finding that potentially 700,000 homes in England are assessed as excessively cold.

Amanda Solloway:

Ensuring warm homes for all is a key priority for government. The Government's 'Help to Heat' schemes, including the Home Upgrade Grant, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Energy Company Obligation, are supporting low-income and vulnerable households in the least energy-efficient homes and tackling fuel poverty, and will deliver upgrades to half a million homes in the coming years.

The benefits of the schemes include creating warmer, greener, and healthier living environments. By reducing the number of cold homes and the associated health-risks, these schemes will bring significant health benefits and reduce the strain on the NHS.

■ Renewable Energy: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[158818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much his Department has spent on investment in renewable energy in British Overseas Territories in each of the past five years.

Graham Stuart:

The Overseas Territories have delegated responsibility for renewable energy. As such, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not provide direct financial support. However, the Government supports renewable energy in the Territories through a range of other channels, including Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to ODA-eligible Territories, and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In 2021/22, the CSSF-funded Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Programme funded renewable energy projects in Ascension, the British Virgin Islands, St Helena, South Georgia, and Tristan da Cunha worth up to £445,000. In 2022/23, the CSSF Governance Programme also supported a renewable energy project in Anguilla worth up to £50,000.

■ Supported Housing: Rates and Rating

Rosie Duffield:

[\[159095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with Ofgem on disabled tenants in supported housing paying bills at domestic rates rather than business rates.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has regular discussions with Ofgem on a wide range of issues in relation to energy retail markets.

On 28 February Ofgem published a call for input on the non-domestic gas and electricity market. This included seeking inputs about the arrangements whereby some domestic customers have their energy supply collectively arranged for them by a managing entity that agrees a non-domestic energy contract, such as mobile park residents, care home residents, and residents of managed flats. Ofgem's call for input is open until 31 March.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture and Forestry: Climate Change

Julian Knight:

[\[158957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to provide centralised resources, information and guidance on climate change adaptation for (a) landowners, (b) woodland managers and (c) forestry practitioners.

Trudy Harrison:

Launched in January this year Forest Research's climate change hub centralises the latest resources, information and guidance on climate change adaptation to support landowners, woodland managers and forestry practitioners in addressing climate change threats. Forest Research has also published a new guide for forest managers to help adapt woodlands for climate change; the UK Forestry Standard Practice Guide 'Adapting forest and woodland management to the changing climate'. The third National Adaptation Programme, due for publication later this year, will include Government actions to address climate change risks and opportunities to the forestry sector. Last year, the Forestry Commission published its Climate change adaptation reporting power third round report, this was part of the third round of the adaptation reporting powers under the Climate Change 2008 Act.

■ **Cats: Theft****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[162263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to make a decision on the potential inclusion of cat abduction in the Kept Animals Bill.

Mark Spencer:

The addition of cats to the pet abduction offence in the Kept Animals Bill was raised at Committee Stage. We are considering it carefully. The next stage of the Bill will be announced in the usual way.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff****Tim Farron:**[\[158872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staff worked for her Department in each year between 2015 and 2022; and what the average vacancy rate was in the same period.

Mark Spencer:

The headcount of staff at the end of each financial year since March 2016 can be found in the attached table. Data is taken from published reports on Gov.uk and March 2015 data is not accessible.

Core Defra cannot provide information on vacancy rate as its Single Operating Platform system does not hold individual vacancy information (this is the same for the whole of Defra).

Attachments:

1. Core Defra staffing 2016-22 [PQ 158872 attachment - Core Defra.pdf]

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Environment Protection****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[160307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to reduce the environmental harms of disposable vapes.

Rebecca Pow:

We are aware that the use of disposable vaping products has increased substantially in recent years and are considering the implications of this trend for the environment. As part of our wider review of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations, we will consult on policies aimed at driving up levels of separate collection of electric and electronic waste, including vaping devices, later this year.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[160308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the vaping industry on the environmental impact of electronic cigarettes.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has not had any discussions with representatives of the vaping industry on the environmental impact of electronic cigarettes.

Kirsten Oswald:[\[160309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the environmental impact of disposable vapes; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not made an assessment of the environmental impacts of disposable vapes. However, as part of our review of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations, we will consult on policies aimed at driving up levels of separate collection of electric and electronic waste, including vaping devices, later this year.

■ Environment Agency: Staff**Tim Farron:**[\[158870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staff worked for the Environment Agency in each year between 2015 and 2022; and what the average vacancy rate was in the same period.

Rebecca Pow:

The average number of full-time equivalent staff employed during each year can be found in the attached table.

The Environment Agency cannot provide information on vacancy rate as its Single Operating Platform system does not hold individual vacancy information (this is the same for the whole of Defra).

Attachments:

1. EA Staff Table [PQ 158870 attachment.pdf]

Fertilisers: Production**Justin Tomlinson:**[\[158901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to amend regulations to improve access to waste nutrients for the production of low carbon fertiliser.

Mark Spencer:

Defra is aware of promising technologies to remove nutrients from waste streams however, there are gaps in knowledge on market readiness, environmental impact and fertiliser value. Defra will consider any example brought to its attention where it is believed regulations need to change, and this would apply in this case.

Justin Tomlinson:[\[158902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help increase the (a) adoption and (b) production of low carbon fertiliser.

Mark Spencer:

Defra is committed to promoting the use of less environmentally damaging fertilisers and better nutrient use efficiency. The existing UK regulatory regime for the manufacture and placing of fertilisers on the market in the UK is fragmented and in need of modernisation. It does not cover organic or recycled nutrients, and newer types of fertilisers.

We aim to improve this by putting in place a conformity assessment framework for fertilisers and aim to consult on this later in 2023. The framework should smooth the route to market for new and innovative products which are less polluting to the environment or are less resource intensive in their creation. This should provide farmers with a wider choice of more sustainable fertilisers and will ease the route to market for low carbon fertilisers, therefore providing farmers with more opportunities to adopt these fertilising products. The framework should valorise fertilisers made from organic materials, opening the market to products that re-use nutrients. The process of implementing new regulations will be iterative as more research is needed into newer fertiliser types before requirements for these products can be drafted into law. Defra cannot recommend which fertilisers must be used. However we have responsibility for setting parameters to ensure their safety, to ensure that they maximise the use of nutrients, and also to reduce potential losses through emissions from their production through to their use.

Given the continuing high fertiliser prices, it remains a priority that we must work to pioneer new technologies to manufacture more organic-based fertiliser products in future. Where possible we will continue to encourage and support such applications for the development and adoption of these through the Farming Innovation Programme. We are also providing financial support to help farmers make best use of their manures and slurries, to complement inorganic fertilisers through the Farming Investment Fund.

■ Fish Farming: Animal Welfare

Dr Matthew Offord:

[160253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to protect the welfare of farmed fish at slaughter.

Mark Spencer:

Last year we asked the Animal Welfare Committee to update its 2014 Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing and we will study their recommendations carefully to inform any proposals.

■ Floods

Damien Moore:

[160380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to research by Fathom and the University of Bristol, entitled A climate-conditioned catastrophe risk model for UK flooding, published on 7 March 2023, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of that research and its forecasting of future damage from UK flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) flood mapping provides a national picture of flood risk for England. The EA provides all its flood risk mapping as open data, as well as it being available to view on gov.uk services, such as [check your long term flood risk](#) and [flood map for planning](#). This combines both local and national modelling, and uses industry best practice in terms of modelling software and approaches.

The EA always seeks to improve modelling to reflect the latest climate science, including a major investment in producing a new national assessment of flood risk by 2024. This will be used to update its [Long Term Investment Scenarios \(LTIS\)](#) last published in 2019. LTIS are an economic assessment showing what future flood and coastal erosion risk management could look like over the next 50 years in England.

Damien Moore:

[160388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to plan for a potential increase in flooding across the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government published a [flood and coastal erosion risk management policy statement](#) in July 2020, setting out the long-term ambition to create a nation more resilient to flood and coastal erosion risk. The Environment Agency (EA) also published the [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management \(FCERM\) Strategy for England](#) in July 2020.

In June 2022 the EA published the [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy Roadmap to 2026](#), outlining the practical actions the EA and other organisations will take to implement the FCERM Strategy by 2026.

The EA continues to build and repair flood and coastal defences to make the nation more resilient to flooding, delivering on the Government's record £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal risk management announced in March 2020. This has already resulted in more than 35,000 properties being better protected from flooding and coastal erosion since April 2021. A list of capital schemes protecting properties, completed between April 2021 and March 2022 is available on data.gov.uk.

■ River Wyre: Per- and Polyfluorinated Alkyl Substances

Cat Smith:

[160315]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to address the presence of toxic perfluorinated and polyfluorinated alkyl substances in the River Wyre.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) is continuing its extensive programme of PFAS monitoring across England including the River Wyre and in surrounding areas.

In the UK REACH Work Programme for 2021-22, Defra asked the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to examine the risks posed by PFAS and develop a 'Regulatory Management Options Analysis' (RMOA). The RMOA will be published in spring 2023 and will make recommendations for risk management measures, building on the commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to tackle chemicals of concern. Defra and the Devolved Administrations will carefully consider its recommendations to inform future PFAS policy.

The EA is working with key partners including Defra, the UK Health Security Agency (former Public Health England), the Food Standards Agency, the Drinking Water Inspectorate and the HSE to inform local plans.

■ Water Companies: Standards

Tim Farron:

[158876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department has produced an impact assessment on the potential impact of revoking the Water Quality Directive.

Rebecca Pow:

We have not produced an impact assessment on the potential impact of revoking the Water Framework Directive because we do not intend to revoke it. Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its retained EU law stock to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Munira Wilson:****[904067]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with the Home Office to help support British citizens in Afghanistan who wish to leave that country.

Leo Docherty:

The FCDO continues to advise against all travel to Afghanistan. British people who are in Afghanistan are able to leave by commercial means, including on commercial flights. There are currently no British consular officials in Afghanistan and our ability to provide assistance is severely limited. A hotline is available 24 hours a day for any British nationals in Afghanistan needing to speak to a consular officer. Consular teams in neighbouring countries are also able to offer some limited remote consular support.

Antony Higginbotham:**[904069]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the UK's economic support for Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is providing more than £1.6 billion in economic and humanitarian support to Ukraine. UK support has helped save lives, keep vital Ukrainian public services running and repair energy infrastructure. We continue to assess and monitor all programme assistance to Ukraine. A review of humanitarian spend will be published in late 2023.

Mark Pawsey:**[904070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made on integrating water, sanitation and hygiene improvements within his Department's health programmes.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are taking action to improve water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in developing countries through global leadership, strengthening WASH and health systems, improving hygiene and as part of our humanitarian programmes. FCDO work in this area is an integral part of Global Health policy and programming, as laid out in our ending preventable deaths approach paper.

Gill Furniss:**[904071]**

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

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK's long-standing position is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of Kashmiri people. It is not for the UK to prescribe a solution or act as a mediator. We continue to monitor the situation and encourage both countries to engage in dialogue and find lasting, diplomatic solutions to maintain regional stability.

Jerome Mayhew:[\[904073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework on peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

Leo Docherty:

The new approach, set out in the Windsor Framework, restores the balance needed to uphold the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in all its dimensions. It restores the smooth flow of trade within the UK; protects Northern Ireland's place in the Union; and addresses the democratic deficit. These changes ensure that Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom is fully respected. The Framework therefore provides a new basis for future stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland, as we look ahead to the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

■ Bahrain: Demonstrations**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[161427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of reports of the arrest of four peaceful protesters in Bahrain; and what representations he plans to make to his Bahraini counterparts on (a) the treatment of those protestors and (b) freedom of protest.

David Rutley:

The FCDO is aware of the arrest on 5 March and the release the same day of four people protesting near the Bahrain Grand Prix. We continue to follow matters that relate to human rights within Bahrain closely, including some individual cases. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad raised a range of human rights issues during his visit to Bahrain on Sunday 12 February. We encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

■ Bangladesh: Ahmadiyya**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[158895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the violence relating to a religious event of the Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh, Bangladesh on 3 March 2023.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Preventing religious violence and upholding Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Bangladesh remains a UK priority. Our support in Bangladesh aims to ensure that the rights of religious minorities, including the Ahmadiyya community, are respected and that these communities are protected from discrimination. We regularly engage with a wide range of civil society and NGO partners to understand the causes and effects of inter-religious conflict. I raised the importance of human rights with the Government of Bangladesh during my recent visit on Sunday the 12 of March 2023. The UK will continue to support FoRB and human rights concerns through regular dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh and our development programme funding.

■ Bilateral Aid: Non-governmental Organisations**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[158864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has set a target for the proportion of bilateral humanitarian aid to be delivered through local non-governmental organisations in the 2022-23 financial year.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

UK humanitarian aid is distributed through a range of delivery partners, including directly via local organisations; or through international organisations who themselves work through local actors. The UK has not set a target for the proportion of bilateral humanitarian aid to be delivered through local partners as this depends on the need and context. However, we strongly support the role of local organisations in meeting humanitarian needs. For example, the FCDO is a major donor to START, an NGO-managed rapid financing mechanism, which delivers humanitarian aid via regional and country hubs, enabling dedicated and targeted support to local NGOs.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Protected Areas**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[158811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many of his officials have duties associated with enforcing the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands) Marine Protected Area.

David Rutley:

It is the responsibility of the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration to ensure enforcement of the Marine Protected Area of the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands). There are no FCDO officials with duties associated with enforcing this Marine Protected Area.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[158812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on the maintenance of the Marine Protected Area around the British Indian Ocean Territory in the last 12 month period for which figures are available.

David Rutley:

The FCDO provides an annual amount to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Administration, which covers environmental protection and governance. In 2022/23, this totals £2.4 million.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[158814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his (a) US and (b) Mauritian counterparts on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

David Rutley:

The Foreign Secretary and his officials are in regular contact with the US on a range of issues, including the British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago. The Foreign Secretary and his Mauritian counterpart Alan Ganoo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade met on 1 March in the margins of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting, where discussions included this issue.

■ British Overseas Territories: Visits Abroad**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[158813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to visit any British Overseas Territories in the next 12 months.

David Rutley:

The Overseas Territories are an integral part of the British family. In addition to our ongoing support, visits by the UK Government reaffirm the unique bond between the UK and the Overseas Territories. Lord Goldsmith, Minister for Overseas Territories, recently visited Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands and saw first-hand the positive impacts of the UK and Overseas Territories partnership. We look forward to further engagement, including during the Coronation and at the Joint Ministerial Council in May, where I plan to welcome and meet with the Overseas Territories' leaders.

■ Diplomatic Service**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[158816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many diplomatic posts his Department has (a) opened and (b) closed in the last five years; and whether he plans to open any new diplomatic posts in 2023.

David Rutley:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) publishes information about the UK's diplomatic representation overseas on GOV.UK. (www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-foreign-office-posts). Published lists date back to October 2014 and are regularly updated, including changes made during the period of enquiry. The lists include all British Embassies, High Commissions and

Consulates at the time of publication. Countries not included in a list did not have a permanent UK diplomatic presence at the time of publication.

The locations of HMG diplomatic presence are routinely scrutinised to ensure that the right people are in the right places to deliver UK priorities. HMG redeploy people and resources around the network as needed. A new British Trade Office will open in Almaty, Kazakhstan this year, reflecting a move towards greater engagement with clean energy and digital technology sectors. It replaces our Trade Office in Atyrau, which closed last year. A new office is planned to open in Dodoma to reflect the relocation of the Government of Tanzania from Dar Es Salaam to the capital.

■ East Africa: Food Supply

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[159049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on aid funding to help tackle the hunger crisis in East Africa.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO works closely with HM Treasury to ensure that aid spend is directed towards our priorities in-line with the International Development Strategy.

The UK is committed to addressing the deteriorating food security and malnutrition situation across East Africa. This financial year the UK will provide £156 million in humanitarian support, supporting millions of people with life-saving aid. The UK is also working to raise the profile of the crisis with our partners and to ensure a robust response from humanitarian and development actors including development banks.

■ Ethiopia: Humanitarian Aid

Patrick Grady:

[\[157662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help support (a) peace building and (b) food security in the Oromia region of Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Ethiopia in December 2022 he met Prime Minister Abiy and discussed the importance of peace for the whole of Ethiopia. The UK has welcomed the commitment in the November 2022 Pretoria peace agreement to implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy and is encouraging the agreement's full implementation. The UK's Ambassador to Ethiopia discussed the violence in Oromia in a meeting with Justice Minister Gedion in March 2023. Through our Human Rights and Peacebuilding Programme the UK is supporting the investigative capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and facilitating dialogue between groups from across Ethiopia. I [Minister Mitchell] announced a £16 million package of humanitarian funding in January 2023 which will support more than 600,000 people facing the impact of drought and conflict across Ethiopia, including Oromia, with food supplies and other nutrition support.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[158863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the funding pledged by his Department to help tackle humanitarian needs in East Africa in the 2022-23 financial year has been (a) disbursed and (b) allocated to local non-governmental organisations in Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government is on course to meet its £156 million humanitarian commitment in East Africa in financial year 22/23. The FCDO is committed to transparency and we will publish details of the overall ODA funding to each of these countries for financial year 22/23 in due course.

Local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play an important role in delivering UK funded humanitarian support.

No UK funding goes directly to local NGOs in Ethiopia; however, in calendar year 2022, the UK provided £7.6 million to the pooled Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF) to support a range of international and local NGOs. As a donor to the EHF, the UK has encouraged the localisation agenda. In 2022, EHF funding to local NGOs - directly and through subgrants - amounted to \$26.5 million (£21 million) an increase of 36% from 2021.

■ Iran: Demonstrations

Martyn Day:

[159044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his department is taking within the UK Embassy in Tehran to (a) assist and (b) protect (i) female, (ii) female Christian and (iii) other protestors in Iran.

David Rutley:

Since September 2022, ordinary Iranians have risked their lives to protest against the Iranian regime's appalling violence and repression. These protests were initiated by women and girls, but rapidly grew to reflect all facets of Iranian society experiencing oppression at the hands of the authorities. Christians and other religious minorities have long faced systematic discrimination, harassment and unfair detention in Iran.

The UK supports women, minority groups and others standing up for their fundamental rights in Iran by ensuring the Iranian regime is held to account. We do this in part through our sanctions designations: HMG has announced six rounds of Iran human rights sanctions since October 2022. We also work with our partners in multilateral fora, for example by removing Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of women. We raise human rights directly with the Iranian authorities at all appropriate opportunities, including through our Ambassador in Tehran to ensure the regime is in no doubt about the political price it is paying for its actions.

■ Iran: Poisoning

Sarah Champion:

[\[158935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of reports of the mass poisoning of school girls in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

We are aware of reports of mass poisonings of school girls across Iran since November and continue to monitor developments closely. On 3 March the Minister for the Middle East Lord (Tariq) Ahmad urged the Iranian authorities to investigate these incidents urgently and with transparency. The Minister underlined that it is essential that all girls can exercise their human right to education without fear.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Caroline Lucas:

[\[158883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (s) levels and (b) impact of settler and military violence against Palestinians in the West Bank; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. We have also stressed the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. The Foreign Secretary also made clear the UK's concerns regarding the escalation of violence in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories in phone calls with both Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen and Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Malki on 7 March.

■ Israel: West Bank

Caroline Lucas:

[\[158884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the transfer of authority of Israel's Civil Administration in the occupied West Bank.

David Rutley:

It has long been the Government's view that Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is governed by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to which Israel is a state party. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and Lord Ahmad has a regular dialogue with Israeli counterparts on these issues. The Civil Administration is a key component of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), which the UK engages regularly on issues relating to the occupation.

■ Members: Correspondence**Hilary Benn:** [\[160204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the email of 1 March from the Rt hon member for Leeds Central on his constituent's husband Mr HM.

David Rutley:

This email was transferred from the Home Office to FCDO on 8 March. We will respond as soon as possible within the Cabinet Office 20-day deadline.

■ Montserrat: Volcanoes**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[158815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential risk of volcanic activity in Montserrat.

David Rutley:

The FCDO supports the work of the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO) who constantly monitor volcanic activity, and funds a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) who visit Montserrat annually to assess volcanic activity. The 2022 visit by the SAC concluded that there has been a subtle change in the activity of the volcano since 2019. This demonstrates that the volcanic system is still active and a restart of lava extrusion remains a possibility. However, this observed activity does not indicate that lava extrusion is imminent or inevitable. The MVO continues to analyse the data and closely monitors the volcano.

■ South Sudan: Commonwealth**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[158809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the application of South Sudan to join the Commonwealth.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Commonwealth is a voluntary partnership of 56 equal member countries, with common values and shared aspirations. Decisions on membership are made by consensus by all member states. There is a clear process for those who wish to join the Commonwealth, managed by the Commonwealth Secretariat in consultation with member states. Prospective members are considered against the criteria for membership, for example, in areas relating to human rights and good governance.

■ Ukraine: Children**Dr Lisa Cameron:** [\[158974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Ukraine on that country's child protection process as it relates to inclusion of and support for disabled children.

Leo Docherty:

The UK engages closely with the Government of Ukraine on Ukraine's child protection process, and works with international organisations and partners to champion support to Ukraine on this issue. We are co-chairing the National Recovery Working Group on Social Protection, and provide technical advisory support on disability inclusion and inclusive care reform. UK funding to Ukraine and the surrounding region aims to prioritise support to the most vulnerable, including people with disabilities and children. We have pledged over £140 million to UN and Red Cross Agencies, including £15 million to UNICEF and £25 million in matched funding to the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism: Children****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[160395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase provision of Child and Adult Mental Health Services for children with autism and ADHD.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[160396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for Child and Adult Mental Health Services for children with autism and ADHD.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[160397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase provision of Child and Adult Mental Health Services for children with autism and ADHD in Battersea constituency.

Marsha De Cordova:[\[160398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for Child and Adult Mental Health Services for children with autism and ADHD in Battersea constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local populations, including in Battersea constituency area. We are supporting them to expand mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24. Part of this increased investment will enable an additional 345,000 children and young people aged zero to 25 years old to access National Health Service funded mental health support.

In recognition of the increased demand created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we invested an extra £79 million in 2021/22 to expand children's mental health services, including enabling around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, 2,000 more to access eating disorder services and accelerating the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

NHS England has consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards as part of its Clinically led Review of NHS Access Standards, including that children, young people and their families, presenting to community-based mental health services should start to receive care within four weeks from referral. As a first step, NHS England has recently shared and promoted guidance with its local system partners to consistently report waiting times to support the development of a baseline position. The Department is now working with NHS England on the next steps for introducing the new access and waiting time standards for mental health services.

In addition, NHS England is currently developing a national framework to support partners in local areas to commission and deliver autism assessment services for children, young people, and adults. The framework will be published in due course.

With respect to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in a recent Westminster Hall debate, on 1 February 2023, I committed to look at how we can improve data on ADHD assessment waiting times, to help improve access to ADHD assessments in a timely way and in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline.

■ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism: Stockport**

Navendu Mishra:

[161440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase provision of mental health services for children with (a) autism and (b) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in Stockport constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: It is the responsibility of integrated care boards to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local populations, including in the Stockport constituency area, and we are supporting them to expand mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24. Part of this increased investment will enable an additional 345,000 children and young people aged zero to 25 years old to access National Health Service funded mental health support.

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With respect to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in a recent Westminster Hall debate on 1 February, I committed to look at how we can improve data on ADHD assessment waiting times, to help improve access to ADHD assessments in a timely way and in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline.

■ **Bereavement Counselling: Finance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[161337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of bereavement services funding.

Maria Caulfield:

No such assessment has been made. Bereavement support is commissioned locally through integrated care boards depending on the needs of that specific population. As part of our new Health and Care Act, bereavement support for palliative care services was added to the list of services integrated care boards have a duty to commission.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[160268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that NHS funding for research into childhood brain tumour is ring-fenced.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: It is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including childhood brain tumours. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[160269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that brain tissue (a) collection and (b) storage infrastructure is adequate to support research into brain tumours.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The Department-funded National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) invests in research, clinical expertise, specialist facilities, workforce and support services across a range of clinical areas, including brain tumour research.

NIHR has recently announced the outcome of the Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) competition in which six BRCs have been funded to support brain tumour research. The NIHR BRCs work in partnership with other research centres to collect samples for research purposes as well as local and national sample storage facilities to support research into brain tumours.

No specific assessment has been made as to the adequacy of the sample collection and storage infrastructure.

■ **Brian House Children's Hospice: Finance**

Cat Smith:

[\[161325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of Government support for Brian House Children's Hospice.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: No specific assessment has been made.

Integrated care boards are required to commission the appropriate palliative and end of life care services considered necessary to meet the reasonable needs of their local populations.

Additionally, NHS England is investing £25 million in the financial year 2023/2024 to provide care close to home for seriously ill children, as and when they need it.

Additionally, £7 million in match funding is being made available to commissioners for local children's palliative and end of life care services for the financial year 2023/2024.

■ **Cerebral Palsy: Shropshire**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[161254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve the quality of care provided to (a) adults and (b) children with cerebral palsy in (a) Shropshire, (b) Telford and (c) Wrekin.

Helen Whately:

Adult and paediatric cerebral palsy services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin are commissioned by the local integrated care board (ICB). Whilst there are no specific

programmes of work connected to cerebral palsy within the ICB's existing improvement programme, as the ICB updates its Integrated Care System Strategy and Joint Forward Plan, it will be developing its clinical strategies across all patient services, including for cerebral palsy.

■ Community Nurses

Wes Streeting:

[122485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many district nurses were employed by NHS England in each of the last 10 years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: NHS England does not employ staff in district nursing roles. A range of organisations, and staff groups within them, provide community health services in England and employ district nurses, including National Health Service trusts, Community Interest Companies, charities and private providers.

For district nurses who are employed by the NHS, NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/>

These include staff working in NHS trusts and commissioning bodies, but exclude staff employed by general practitioner surgeries, local authorities, and other independent providers who make up a significant sector of the Community Health Services provider market.

■ Dental Services: Finance

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[162135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of ringfencing NHS Dental funding provisions.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England is responsible for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population. Many of these functions will transfer to integrated care boards (ICBs) from April 2023.

We have assessed the merits of ringfencing National Health Service dental funding provisions. NHS England has provided guidance for ICBs that requires dental funding to be ringfenced, with any unused resources re-directed to improve NHS dental access in the first instance. A schedule setting out the dental ringfence has been issued to ICBs. NHS England's 2023/24 revenue finance and contracting guidance, which provides more detail, is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/2023-24-revenue-finance-and-contracting-guidance/>

■ **Dental Services: Huddersfield**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [162133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the availability of NHS dentists in Huddersfield constituency.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [162134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken in the last 12 months to improve the capacity of NHS Dental provision in Huddersfield.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England is responsible for commissioning primary care dentistry to meet the needs of the local population. Many of the dentistry commissioning functions undertaken by NHS England will transfer to integrated care boards from April 2023. NHS England has made available to commissioners an Assurance Framework to provide assurances on commissioning.

In September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients' which sets out how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to National Health Service dental care, including in Huddersfield, whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices.

These changes have been implemented, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022. This includes enabling commissioning of up to 110% of contracted Units of Dental Activities to increase NHS care, fairer remuneration for practices providing complex treatment within current Band 2 treatments and removing barriers around use of staff skills mix in NHS dentistry. We have also worked with the General Dental Council on legislative proposals to allow the regulator greater flexibility to expand the registration options open to international dentists.

NHS England is holding further discussions with the British Dental Association and other stakeholders for additional reforms of the NHS Dental System planned to take place this year.

■ **Dental Services: West Yorkshire**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [162136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the levels of delivery of Units of Dental Activity by NHS Dentists in (a) Huddersfield, (b) Kirklees and (c) West Yorkshire.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [162137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the units of dental activity delivered by NHS dentists in (a) Huddersfield, (b) Kirklees and (c) West Yorkshire.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table shows the number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) delivered over the past three financial years for Kirklees and West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB). Data for Kirklees includes data for Huddersfield which is not published separately.

FINANCIAL YEAR	KIRKLEES LOCAL AUTHORITY	WEST YORKSHIRE ICB
2019/20	771,845	3,307,858
2020/21	236,570	1,081,539
2021/22	555,156	2,678,102

The pandemic is likely to have had an impact on the UDAs delivered for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients' which sets out how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to National Health Service dental care in England whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices to support the delivery of commissioned dental activity. These changes have been implemented, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022. This includes enabling commissioning of up to 110% of contracted UDAs to increase NHS care from December 2022. NHS England is holding further discussions with the British Dental Association and other stakeholders for further reform later this year.

On 29 March 2021, NHS England published a flexible commissioning toolkit for regional commissioners. Flexible commissioning is an element of existing NHS dental contracts that enables UDA to be better targeted towards priority and high needs groups of patients. NHS England is continuing to monitor the use of the arrangements to meet local needs.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Disability**Chris Stephens:****[R] [150534]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 27 February 2023]: The Department is proud to have achieved Disability Confident Leader status under the Government's Disability Confident scheme.

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.

In the table below we have outlined the overall number of existing Civil Servant candidates who applied for a job advertised either across the Department or across the Civil Service; and whose application was both under the Disability Confident scheme and on promotion within each calendar year.

	2021	2022
Number of existing Civil Servants who applied under the Disability Confident scheme on promotion	347	256
Of which were interviewed	70 (20%)	49 (19%)
Of which were offered a role	28 (8%)	15 (6%)

Please note the question of "Applying for Promotion" is only asked for vacancies which are advertised internally or across Government and therefore no externally advertised vacancies are included in the data set.

For comparison, outcomes for those who applied on promotion but not under the Disability Confident Scheme are as follows: in 2021, 23% were interviewed and 10% were offered a role; in 2022, 19% were interviewed and 7% were offered a role.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Mobile Phones

Emily Thornberry:

[\[148573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) iPhone 12, (b) iPhone 13 and (c) iPhone 14 devices were purchased for use by staff in his core Department in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

Will Quince:

The table below shows the quantity of the requested iPhone models purchased during the years 2020 – 2022:

	2020	2021	2022
iPhone SE	300	400	650
iPhone 12	0	0	0
iPhone 13	0	1	1570
iPhone 13 Pro	0	2	0
iPhone 14	0	0	0

Other models of phone were purchased in this period.

■ **Diagnosis and Research: Artificial Intelligence**

Julian Knight:

[158964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has provided funding for the development of artificial intelligence technologies to advance (a) research and (b) the diagnosis of illnesses in the latest period for which data is available.

Will Quince:

Through funding from the Department, the NHS AI Lab is working in partnership with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to support the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in health and care research. This includes the 'Artificial Intelligence in Health and Care Award' which aims to increase the impact of AI systems in helping to solve clinical and operational challenges across the National Health Service.

The NIHR is also funding a research programme into Artificial Intelligence for Multiple Long-Term Conditions which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/nihr-artificial-intelligence-for-multiple-long-term-conditions-aim-clusters-call-research-specification-finalised/24646>

■ **Eat Out to Help Out Scheme: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[158931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme on covid-19 transmission rates.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Children and Young People**

Rachael Maskell:

[162241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will work with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that all young people are taught about the addictive nature of vaping and that it forms part of the health education programme in schools.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education are working closely to ensure that children are taught the facts about vaping, including that nicotine is addictive. This is part of a range of actions the Department of Health and Social Care is taking to ensure that young people are aware of the risks of using vapes. In October 2022, we published new vaping content on the Talk to Frank and Better Health websites and we have also developed a suite of resources for schools

to use, including the recently published Year 9 lesson plan published by the PSHE Association available at the following link:

<https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/vaping?hsLang=en>

On 8 March, the Prime Minister announced that the Department for Education is bringing forward the review of the relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance which will give stakeholders the opportunity to look at where new content is needed, and existing content can be strengthened. The Department for Education will consider whether content on vaping should be included. The revised statutory guidance will be published in 2024.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Health Hazards**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[160457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Government has made of the potential impact of vaping on the health of young people.

Neil O'Brien:

Whilst the Department has not made a formal assessment on the impact of vaping on young people, we are clear that vapes should not be used by children under the age of 18 years old. Vapes are not risk-free, nicotine is highly addictive and can be harmful and there are unanswered questions on the effects of longer-term use.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Public Spaces**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[162240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward a ban of vaping in public enclosed places to prevent chemicals from vapes being exhaled in those spaces.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government has no plans to ban vaping in public enclosed places. In 2016, the Government published guidance to inform evidence-based policy making on vapes in public places and available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-e-cigarettes-in-public-places-and-workplaces>

Organisations are able to use this guidance should they wish to implement their own evidence-based policies.

■ **General Practitioners**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[137924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many fully-qualified GPs were working in General Practice in England in (a) 2019 and (b) the most recent period for which data is available.

Will Quince:

The Government has considered the link between changes to the volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment, along with any associated impacts on employment in the life sciences industry in the United Kingdom, in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS).

The Government's 2023 impact assessment of updates to the statutory scheme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-update-to-the-2023-statutory-scheme-to-control-the-costs-of-branded-health-service-medicines>

With regard to the impact of medicine price regulation schemes on the level of foreign direct investment into the UK's life sciences research and development, the evidence on this issue is uncertain. The impact assessment considered this issue, and sets out the Government's assessment that, while price regulation schemes such as VPAS may be a consideration in the decision to locate such investments, these are complex decisions based on multiple factors. Supply side factors such as the availability of skilled labour are considered likely to be of greater significance.

With regard to the impact of price regulation on the placement of clinical trials in the UK, the Government's assessment is that price control schemes in general are more likely to impact decisions about the location of late-stage than early-stage trials, as the location of late-stage trials may be more influenced by commercial considerations about where to launch a new medicine. However, VPAS includes strong commercial incentives to launch new products in the form of freedom of list pricing and exemptions from payments for innovative medicines containing a new active substance.

■ General Practitioners: East of England**Daisy Cooper:****[161415]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of closures of GP surgeries in the East of England.

Neil O'Brien:

No assessment has been made. However, practices close for a variety of reasons, including mergers or retirement. A reduction in practice numbers does not mean a reduction in the quality of care. When a practice does close, patients are informed of the closure and advised to register at another local practice of their choice within their area. Commissioners must put in place appropriate measures to ensure that the affected patients have access to general practitioner services.

■ Health Services: Staff**Feryal Clark:**[\[160448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to para 2.37 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, if he will provide regular updates on the long-term workforce plan.

Will Quince:

We are committed to growing the National Health Service workforce, which is why we commissioned NHS England to publish a long term workforce plan to help recruit and retain more staff. This plan is currently being developed and we have committed to publishing it this year.

■ Health Services: Watford**Sir Mike Penning:**[\[158833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the agreements with Watford Borough Council and the property company Kier signed by the West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in relation to the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP, which runs until 2033 unless previously terminated by agreement, by what authority that Trust signed those agreements; what the legal basis is of that authority; and whether that authority has or had a start or end date.

Will Quince:

National Health Service trusts and NHS foundation trusts own their own land and buildings and are responsible for the sale or disposal of identified assets. Trusts work with integrated care boards, including the local authority and NHS England, on planning and optimising their estate.

The Watford Campus Agreement was signed in 2013 by West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Watford Borough Council and the Local asset backed vehicle LABV, which comprises Watford Borough Council and the property company Kier. It was approved by the Trust Board. Regulatory authority is required at the point when expenditure exceeds the delegated £15 million limit. To date, the Trust has contributed £7 million towards the construction of the access road, which opened in 2016. The Watford Campus Agreement has an end date of 2033 unless previously terminated by agreement of all parties.

■ Health Services: Women**Rosie Duffield:**[\[160358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to measure the impact of the Women's Health Strategy for England in its first year.

Maria Caulfield:

On 24 January 2023, I wrote to MPs to update on the year one priorities for implementing the Women's Health Strategy. We will update Parliament annually on progress, with the first update due in September 2023.

Health Visitors**Wes Streeting:**[\[122486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many health visitors were employed by NHS England in each of the last 10 years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: NHS England does not employ staff in health visiting roles. Local Authorities have been responsible for commissioning health visiting services since 2015. These services may be commissioned from National Health Service trusts as well as other providers. Services are led by health visitors as Specialist Community Public Health Nurses within a skill mix team including community staff nurses and nursery nurses.

For health visitors who are employed by the NHS, NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics/>

This includes staff employed by hospital trusts and commissioning bodies, but excludes staff directly employed by primary care, general practitioner surgeries, local authorities, and other providers such as community interest companies and private providers.

Heart Diseases: Screening**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[147423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans for the National Screening Committee to review their decision on screening for Sudden Cardiac Arrest; and what discussions he has had that Committee on a cardiac screening test for children and young people.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is due to review the evidence to screen for conditions associated with sudden cardiac death (SCD) in the young in 2023/24. In March this year Ministers discussed the next review on SCD with UK NSC Chair and secretariat, what evidence gaps still remain and how these might be addressed. Researchers and stakeholders are encouraged to have their work in SCD peer reviewed and published in order for the UK NSC to consider its findings.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Wes Streeting:

[\[140193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the total spend on consultants for the New Hospitals Programme in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2020-21.

Will Quince:

The New Hospital Programme is a national programme that is responsible for the delivery of the Government's commitment to build 40 new hospitals. The consultants the programme has engaged with have been specialists who have brought highly technical skills, support, and experience needed for a programme of this size and complexity. The specialist consultants have been utilised for the programme on a temporary and specific basis. We continually review the number of consultants being utilised by the New Hospital Programme, and expect to make significant savings using specialist consultants to develop standardised design across the whole New Hospital Programme.

Please see the total spend on consultants for the New Hospital Programme for financial years 2021/22 and 2020/21 in the following table:

	2020/21	2021/22
Total spending on consultants for the New Hospital Programme	£4.6 million	£52.1 million

■ Influenza

Esther McVey:

[\[161286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what definition is given by his Department to the term flu and whether it relates to specific pathogens.

Maria Caulfield:

'Flu' is short for 'influenza'. Influenza is an acute viral infectious disease of the respiratory tract caused by influenza viruses. There are three types of influenza virus, A, B and C. Influenza A and influenza B are responsible for most clinical illness. The disease is characterised by the sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue. Other common symptoms include a dry cough, sore throat and stuffy nose.

Influenza viruses are significant human respiratory pathogens that cause both seasonal, endemic infections and periodic, unpredictable pandemics. While there are many pathogens that cause acute respiratory infections, the term 'flu' is specific to influenza. Similarly, 'influenza-like illness' is medical or public health surveillance terminology for an acute respiratory infection that has signs or symptoms characteristic of influenza, rather than being used more loosely to describe acute respiratory infections in general.

■ Life Sciences: Drugs

Jim Shannon:

[\[158915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the report by WPI Economics entitled False economy: How NHS medicine procurement threatens the UK's Life Sciences growth engine, published in February 2023.

Will Quince:

The Department carefully considers all evidence in the public domain on matters relating to the growth and competitiveness of the United Kingdom Life Science sector, including the recent report by WPI Strategy. This happens in combination with broad engagement with individual companies, the National Health Service and with charities and patient representatives. We will continue in future as part of the delivery of the Government's Life Science Vision.

■ Loneliness: Older People

James Daly:

[\[159047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce isolation of elderly people in local communities.

Helen Whately:

The Government is working with partners to support local areas to share and learn from best practice examples. This includes working with the Local Government Association to provide guidance on how local councils can tackle loneliness and providing a space for organisations to share resources on the Tackling Loneliness Hub.

The Levelling Up White Paper set out ambitions to improve wellbeing and pride in place across the country. We know that connected communities that provide people with opportunities to develop strong social relationships are an important part of delivering those ambitions.

In addition, social prescribing is a key component of the National Health Service Universal Personalised Care and is a way for general practitioners or local agencies to refer people to a link worker. Link workers connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Social prescribing can work well for those who are socially isolated or whose wellbeing is being impacted by non-medical issues.

■ Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Staff

Chi Onwurah:

[\[158907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2023 to Question 149488 on Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Staff, for what reason staffing levels fell between June 2021 and December 2022; and whether his Department plans to take steps to increase staffing capacity.

Will Quince:

Staffing levels at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) fell between June 2021 and December 2022 due to the 'One Agency' Transformation Programme as detailed in the MHRA's Delivery Plan 2021-2023. During this transformation, the MHRA prioritised filling vacancies with contingent resources until the conclusion of the organisational change element of the transformation. This decision was made in order to minimise impact on Civil Servant roles. Since then, the MHRA have been successfully recruiting to the new structure.

Members: Correspondence**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[151285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will respond to the correspondence of 1 December 2022 from the hon. Member for West Worcestershire on Select Research in Malvern.

Will Quince:

We replied to the hon. Member on 6 March 2023.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Paula Barker:**[\[156305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to provide funding for mental health services for people under the age of 18.

Maria Caulfield:

It is the responsibility of integrated care boards (ICBs) to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population, and we are supporting them to expand mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 so that an additional two million are able to access National Health Service funded mental health support.

The spend for children and young people's mental health services has increased from £841.4 million in 2019/20 to £994.8 million 2021/22, with a planned spend of £1.0815 billion in 2022/23. This funding is across both NHS specialised commissioning which includes eating disorders services and local commissioning. The source of this data is from the NHS England dashboard. Previous and most recent NHS mental health dashboards is available at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[160340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health provision for (a) babies, (b) toddlers, (c) children and (d) young people.

Maria Caulfield:

At the 2021 Autumn Budget the Government committed to improving support for families by announcing around £300 million to fund a new three-year Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. A significant proportion of this funding has been allocated to support perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships. We are committed to ensuring that parents and carers can access timely and seamless mental health and relationship support from a baby's conception.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24. This will allow an extra two million people by 2023/24, including 345,000 more children and young people, to access National Health Service funded mental health support.

We also provided an additional £79 million in response to the pandemic to expand children's mental health services in the 2021/22 financial year. This allowed around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, 2,000 more to access eating disorder services and a faster increase in the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

There are currently 287 mental health support teams, covering 26% of pupils, in place in around 4,700 schools and colleges across the country, offering support to children experiencing anxiety, depression, and other common mental health issue. Over 500 support teams are planned to be up and running by 2024.

■ Neurology: Mental Health Services**Stephen Morgan:**[\[162273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to patients receiving inpatient psychiatric care, for how long on average such patients receive such care where they (a) have Huntington's disease or a similar neurological condition and (b) do not have such a neurological condition.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ NHS: Bullying and Harassment**Feryal Clark:**[\[160450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard, published on 22 February, what plans his Department has to tackle the (a) increase in reports of bullying, abuse and harassment by patients, their families and the public and (b) gap in the experience of these behaviours by ethnic minority and white staff.

Will Quince:

Everyone working in the National Health Service has the fundamental right to be safe at work. NHS England has developed a Violence Reduction Programme which aims to support our people, in all care settings, prevent and reduce violence and aggression from patients, their families and the public. It has introduced standards

which help organisations to assess their arrangements for managing the risk of violence towards staff. These have been developed in partnership with the trade's unions.

NHS England is developing an NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion workforce plan which will include specific actions and expectations to embed inclusive and fair recruitment and promotion practices in organisations, to address under representation and talent management across all protected characteristics. Additionally, NHS trusts have workforce and organisational improvement plans in place to reduce bullying, abuse, harassment and discrimination against staff.

■ NHS: Pensions

Feryal Clark: [160449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's consultation entitled NHS Pension Scheme: proposed amendments to scheme regulations published on 5 December 2022, when his Department's response to that consultation will be published.

Will Quince:

The Department published its response to the consultation on amendments to the NHS Pension Scheme on 7 March 2023. This is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nhs-pension-scheme-proposed-amendments-to-scheme-regulations/outcome/nhs-pension-scheme-proposed-amendments-to-scheme-regulations-consultation-response>.

Overall, the proposed changes were well received and most of the respondents agreed that they should be implemented. The Department therefore intends to proceed with the proposals it set out.

■ Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment

Tim Farron: [162145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many linear accelerator (LINAC) machines are in operation across all NHS Trusts.

Tim Farron: [162146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many linear accelerator (LINAC) machines in operation across all NHS Trusts are beyond their recommended 10-year lifespan.

Helen Whately:

As of 31 March 2022, the number of linear accelerators aged 10 years old and over was approximately 20 out of a total of 268 machines in the National Health Service.

■ Raynaud's Phenomenon: Finance

Fleur Anderson:

[\[162307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to provide (a) energy bill and (b) other financial support to people with Raynaud's.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government recognises that rising energy prices can make it more difficult for people to heat their homes, and that cold homes can have an adverse impact on the health of vulnerable population groups. The Government's cost of living support package includes specific measures aimed at the most vulnerable. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023/24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and disabled people. The Household Support Fund will provide £1 billion in 2023/24 to be spent locally on tailored support for the most vulnerable households. We know that there are good examples of the National Health Service and local authorities working together to ensure this support helps people with particular health vulnerabilities.

The Government is also helping all households with their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee. Over this winter the Government has paid around half of a typical household's energy bill, cutting the average bill by £1,300 this winter.

■ Ruxolitinib: Skin Diseases

Damien Moore:

[\[160386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential health impacts of Opzelura for patients on the treatment of vitiligo and eczema.

Will Quince:

Opzelura (ruxolitinib), is currently not approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA has noted that the European Medicines Agency's Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use issued a positive opinion for this on the 23 of February 2023 and is currently pending European Commission (EC) approval.

Should an application for Opzelura be received by the MHRA, we have processes in place to review this and, if appropriate, issue a licence in line with an EC decision.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Health Services

Janet Daby:

[\[160410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of NHS staff to identify when a patient is undergoing a Sickle Cell crisis.

Janet Daby:

[160414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase awareness of Sickle Cell amongst healthcare professionals outside of London.

Neil O'Brien:

No assessment has been made. NHS England and Health Education England (HEE) have invested in raising awareness of sickle cell disease amongst medical staff. NHS England's Health Inequalities improvement team launched a sickle cell awareness campaign 'Can you tell it's sickle cell' in June 2022 and continues to promote and monitor its reach. A sickle cell disorder e-learning resource has also been developed and is now available across the National Health Service.

There have been recent improvements to the haematology medical curriculum, with understanding sickle cell and thalassaemia now described in the curriculum as core competencies. HEE has additionally held discussions with the Royal Colleges of Pathology and Physicians to ensure that this curriculum is deliverable across all four nations, in line with General Medical Council standards.

In addition to the above e-learning, HEE now provides two 'e-Learning for healthcare' programmes with sickle cell content, NHS Screening Programmes, including the Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening Programme and the Maternity Support Worker Programme.

Janet Daby:

[160412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of ring-fencing funding and resources to help ensure adequate staffing levels to treat sickle cell patients.

Janet Daby:

[160413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that sickle cell services receive increased (a) staffing and (b) funding levels.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS England has launched an end-to-end sickle cell clinical pathway review led by the Health Inequalities Improvement team. The end-to-end clinical pathway for patients with sickle cell disease is being reviewed to identify opportunities for delivering improvements. The review is at an early stage but has highlighted a number of opportunities to improve current services, including in relation to workforce, the digitalisation of care plans and general education of the public about the condition.

In addition, NHS England is undertaking an exercise to assess compliance of Specialist Haemoglobinopathy Teams and Haemoglobinopathy Coordinating Centres with the respective service specifications which are published on the Haemoglobinopathies Clinical Reference Group webpage.

Resources have been invested in raising awareness of sickle cell disease amongst medical staff. There have been recent improvements to the haematology medical curriculum, with sickle cell disease and thalassemia now described in the curriculum as core competencies. Health Education England (HEE) also provides a range of e-learning that includes sickle cell disease content. HEE has held discussions with the Royal Colleges of Pathology and Physicians to ensure this curriculum is deliverable to all four nations, in line with General Medical Council standards. The Haemoglobinopathy Coordinating Centres also provide network development, leadership, learning and education across their network area.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Nutrition

Janet Daby:

[\[161409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including in sickle cell health care protocols policies to promote the importance of nutrition.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. There is little evidence in support of any specific nutritional intervention that ameliorates sickle cell symptoms and therefore, there is no intention at this point to incorporate specific information regarding nutrition in national protocols or policies.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Pain

Janet Daby:

[\[160408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure hospitals' adhere to NICE guidelines to deliver pain relief to Sickle Cell patients within 30 minutes and to monitor patients beyond the first dose of pain relief.

Janet Daby:

[\[160409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure Sickle Cell patients are treated in a timely way when attending hospital services.

Janet Daby:

[\[160417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to review the process of administering pain relief for Sickle Cell patients.

Neil O'Brien:

Specialist haemoglobinopathy teams and haemoglobinopathy co-ordinating centres are required to submit data via the Specialised Services Quality Dashboard on the percentage of patients given pain relief within 30 minutes of presentation with a sickle cell crisis, as per the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. The data does not include patients attending non-specialist haemoglobinopathy

providers and further work is required to improve the accuracy of the data submission before it can be used to assess compliance.

The National Sickle Pain Group, a sub-group of the Specialised Commissioning Haemoglobinopathies Clinical Reference Group, has produced guidance for hospitals to improve the care for sickle cell patients presenting with acute sickle pain and are working on an associated acute pain audit to measure the time to first analgesia universally across England.

NHS England has launched an end-to-end sickle cell clinical pathway review led by the Health Inequalities Improvement team. The end-to-end clinical pathway for patients with sickle cell disease is being reviewed to identify opportunities for delivering improvements.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Prescriptions

Janet Daby:

[160418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing free prescriptions for sickle cell patients.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no plans to make an assessment. Approximately 89% of prescription items are already dispensed free of charge and there are already a wide range of exemptions from prescription charges currently in place. Patients with sickle cell disease may meet the eligibility criteria for another prescription charge exemption and be in receipt of free prescriptions.

■ Skin Diseases: Health Services

Feryal Clark:

[157714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the two-week wait cancer referral target on referral waiting times for inflammatory skin conditions.

Helen Whately:

The Department has no current plans to make an assessment. The two-week cancer referral target for cancer reflects the importance of early diagnosis and treatment for that particular disease. Patients should wait no longer than 18 weeks for all other non-urgent, consultant-led treatments, including for inflammatory skin conditions.

NHS England published 'The two-week wait skin cancer pathway: innovative approaches to support early diagnosis of skin cancer as part of the NHS COVID-19 recovery plan' in April 2022, which emphasises that providers should not prioritise skin cancer targets to the detriment of the timely care of people with rashes and long-term skin conditions.

■ Social Services: Disability

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has assessed the potential merits of providing extra financial support for the social care sector to ensure that working age disabled people who require support live independent and fulfilling lives; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

This Department has not assessed the merits of providing extra financial support for working age disabled people.

We have made available up to £7.5 billion in additional funding over two years to support adult social care and discharge. This represents a more than real terms increase; and we expect local authorities to deliver tangible improvements to adult social care services, such as those for working age adults, as a result.

Local authorities are best placed to assess local resource and need, and they distribute their funding based on the local population demographics and relevant regional issues.

■ Social Services: Finance

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the report of the Care Quality Commission, The state of health care and adult social care in England 2021-22, on the challenges facing the social care if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding for that sector.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the current challenges in social care. This is why we are making available up to £7.5 billion over two years to support adult social care and discharge, a more than real terms increase. We expect Local Authorities to use this funding to go beyond meeting inflationary and demographic pressures facing adult social care and deliver tangible improvements to services. These improvements should address waiting lists, low fee rates, and workforce pressures.

■ Social Workers: Pay

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of parity of remuneration for social care workers in (a) the NHS, (b) local authorities and (c) other publicly funded industries.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made.

■ Surgical Hubs

Peter Dowd: [\[162208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many surgical hubs are currently in operation; and are due to be operating by the end of 2023.

Will Quince:

There are currently 89 elective surgical hubs in operation in England. 16 further new elective hubs are due to open by December 2023, subject to construction being able to progress as planned, as recent availability of materials and other external factors are impacting some project delivery timelines. The Department and NHS England are working with providers in each locality on revised hub timings where appropriate.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling

Peter Gibson: [\[161412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making the sale of cigarettes subject to a system of licensing to help prevent the prevalence of illegal cigarettes.

Neil O'Brien:

An assessment provided in the Khan Review suggests a retailers' licensing scheme would reduce underage and illicit sales and protect law abiding businesses. We will shortly be unveiling a wide-reaching set of proposals to support our ambition to be Smokefree by 2030, and this will include action to further tackle illicit tobacco.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[156040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the answer of 1 March to Question 152186 on Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, for what reason the Christchurch resident with case reference VAD7859 (a) is awaiting a decision and (b) has not been receiving timely responses to emails and phone calls requesting information on progress.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 6 March 2023]: We are unable to provide the information requested as it relates to personal data from which a claimant could be identified.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[157048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of a potential link between the rebate in the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access and (a) the level of foreign direct investment into UK life sciences Research and Development, (b) the placement of clinical trials in the UK and (c) employment levels in the life sciences industry in the UK.

Will Quince:

The Government has considered the link between changes to the volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment, along with any associated impacts on employment in the life sciences industry in the United Kingdom, in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS).

The Government's 2023 impact assessment of updates to the statutory scheme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-update-to-the-2023-statutory-scheme-to-control-the-costs-of-branded-health-service-medicines>

With regard to the impact of medicine price regulation schemes on the level of foreign direct investment into the UK's life sciences research and development, the evidence on this issue is uncertain. The impact assessment considered this issue, and sets out the Government's assessment that, while price regulation schemes such as VPAS may be a consideration in the decision to locate such investments, these are complex decisions based on multiple factors. Supply side factors such as the availability of skilled labour are considered likely to be of greater significance.

With regard to the impact of price regulation on the placement of clinical trials in the UK, the Government's assessment is that price control schemes in general are more likely to impact decisions about the location of late-stage than early-stage trials, as the location of late-stage trials may be more influenced by commercial considerations about where to launch a new medicine. However, VPAS includes strong commercial incentives to launch new products in the form of freedom of list pricing and exemptions from payments for innovative medicines containing a new active substance.

Jim Shannon:**[158912]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the payment rates under the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access on (a) clinical trials, (b) NHS income and (c) access to new medicines for patients.

Jim Shannon:**[158913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the payment rates under the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access on (a) clinical trials and (b) other research and development.

Will Quince:

The Government has considered in broad terms the link between volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded

medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS).

The Government's 2023 impact assessment of updates to the statutory scheme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-update-to-the-2023-statutory-scheme-to-control-the-costs-of-branded-health-service-medicines>

The Government is working to better understand the impacts the operation of the current VPAS on the United Kingdom life sciences industry. We are in direct conversations with pharmaceutical companies, including in the recent pre-negotiation workshops, as well as with the Department for Science Innovation and Technology, and Department for Business and Trade about the business environment for life sciences.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[162117]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (a) principals and (b) dependents are currently being housed in bridging hotels following their relocation to the UK under that scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government continues to work at pace, in collaboration with over 350 local authorities across the UK, to meet the demand for housing. Alongside this, we are reaching out to landlords, developers, and the wider private rented sector to encourage further offers of properties.

All those resettling under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), have recourse to public funds and the right to work and study.

We are working intensely across government, and in partnership with c.350 local authorities across the country to both bring down the number of people in bridging hotels and move families into more sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible so they can put down permanent roots. Local authorities currently receive integration tariff funding of £20,520 per person, over three years, for each Afghan family they resettle and provide full integration support to for this duration.

The UK is currently experiencing a shortage of local housing accommodation for all, and we acknowledge that sourcing appropriate accommodation for Afghan families can be a complex process due to the diverse needs of those we are supporting. However, this government will remain committed to ensuring each and every Afghan family resettling in the UK has a permanent home. Whilst hotels do not provide a long-term solution, they do offer safe, secure and clean accommodation.

Statistics on individuals resettled or relocated under the Afghan schemes is available in the [Immigration System Statistics, year ending December 2022](#) release.

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Coastal Areas

Damien Moore:

[160381]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Department are taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in coastal communities.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB) wherever it may take place. We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and the wider community.

We provided the police, local authorities, and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. They are best placed to understand what is driving the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

The Home Office published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of these powers. The guidance sets out the importance of focusing on the needs of the victim and the local community, as well as ensuring that the relevant legal tests are met. This guidance was updated in June 2022 to ensure a victim-centred approach to tackling ASB as well as stronger use of the powers and tools in the 2014 Act.

The Home Office announced in March 2022 that ASB would be one of the primary crime and issue types being targeted in the next round of the Safer Streets Fund. This funding goes towards local projects aimed at increasing the safety of public spaces for all with a particular focus on addressing neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and tackling violence against women and girls. At the end of July last year, we announced the outcome of Round Four of the Safer Streets Fund, investing an additional £50 million and supporting 111 projects across England and Wales.

We are on target to recruit the 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, taking us for the first time to over 148,400 officers across England and Wales. This will be the highest number of officers serving communities across England and Wales on record.

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 target of 20,000 additional officers by March 2023.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Sarah Olney: [162253]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether a Ministerial Direction has been issued on the decision to grant Government funding to house asylum seekers in hotels.

Robert Jenrick:

No Ministerial Direction has been issued on the decision to grant Government funding to house asylum seekers in hotels. All Ministerial Directions are published on <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-directions>.

Sarah Olney: [162254]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of housing asylum seekers in hotels in each of the next three years.

Robert Jenrick:

In order to meet our statutory obligations to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute, we have been forced to temporarily house asylum seekers in hotels. The use of hotels is a short term solution and we are working hard with Local Authorities and our accommodation providers to find more appropriate accommodation.

Operating hotels as contingency accommodation for asylum seekers is not something we want to be doing and is not a long-term solution. We have been working with providers, local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships in order to move people from hotels across the country to more suitable dispersal accommodation. Increased asylum intake has meant that the Home Office has had to deal with growing demand for asylum support and accommodation services. In addition to these pressures, it remains slow to bring on dispersal accommodation, and procurement has not kept pace with intake.

We do not have a set budget for contingency hotels. Costs are subject to change depending on numbers being accommodated within the asylum system.

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not publish this information. However, total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

■ Asylum: Housing

Seema Malhotra: [162183]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have been removed from their dispersal accommodation by the provider but are not currently in alternative dispersal accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office provides dispersal accommodation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. That accommodation is generally available until the asylum application is decided and, or eligibility for support has ceased.

Accommodation providers may occasionally relocate people temporarily – for example to repair a property. The number of people formerly housed in dispersal accommodation who are currently awaiting an alternative is not recorded.

Seema Malhotra:[\[162184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that all dispersal accommodation providers who remove an asylum seeker from their accommodation immediately organise for her Department to arrange alternative dispersal accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

Dispersal accommodation is longer-term accommodation managed by Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (AASC) Accommodation providers on behalf of the Home Office.

Asylum seekers normally remain in dispersal accommodation until their asylum claim has been fully determined. It is not always possible to stay in the same property in the event that the property is withdrawn by the landlord or the Home Office is not satisfied that the property continues to meet the high standards we expect.

The accommodation needs of any newly granted refugees do, of course, fall to local authorities as part of their statutory duties.

■ Asylum: LGBT+ People**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[160341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect LGBT+ people from experiencing homophobic abuse whilst in detention in the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The rights of all detained individuals are safeguarded by the [Detention Centre Rules 2001](#), published operating standards for immigration removal centres (IRCs) and [Detention Services Orders](#) (DSO).

Any discrimination against those who are detained in our immigration removal estate is unacceptable, and we take robust action against anyone who is found not to have behaved appropriately. Published guidance sets out the standards of treatment for transexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in detention, to ensure that all staff working in the Home Office removal estate are aware of the actions to identify and appropriately meet their needs.

Detainee Custody Officers in IRCs receive diversity training as part of their initial training, covering the treatment of LGBT detained persons and others with protected characteristics. In addition, supplier staff provide opportunities for detained individuals

to safely disclose their sexual orientation and ensure that those who choose to disclose can access support and assistance. This information is treated sensitively in line with data protection legislation.

■ Asylum: Questionnaires

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[160339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure asylum seekers are not penalised if questionnaires are sent to previous addresses following relocation.

Robert Jenrick:

We need to make sure asylum seekers do not spend months or years - living in the UK at vast expense to the taxpayer - waiting for a decision. That is why the Prime Minister has made a commitment to clear the historical asylum backlog by the end of the year.

As part of this commitment, 12,000 asylum seekers who lodged asylum claims before 28 June 2022 are going to be considered through a Streamlined Asylum Process. This will involve eligible claimants being sent a questionnaire to their correspondence address asking them to provide all the necessary information so claims can be considered more quickly. This will speed up decisions for those in genuine need, ending the uncertainty over their future, and help us remove people with no right to be here.

Claimants who receive an asylum questionnaire will have 20 working days to respond. If the questionnaire is not returned within the timeframe, we will make further attempts to contact eligible claimants and they will receive a reminder via post, email and phone (where they have made their contact details available to the Home Office), and a further 10 working days to complete the questionnaire. Extensions can be requested by contacting the Home Office.

All relevant individual circumstances will be considered, on a case-by-case basis when deciding whether someone's asylum claim should be withdrawn. Asylum claims will not be withdrawn if there is a reasonable explanation

■ Asylum: Staff

Sarah Olney:

[\[162255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department spent on processing asylum claims in each of the last three years.

Sarah Olney:

[\[162256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff worked on processing asylum claims in each of the last three years.

Sarah Olney:

[162257]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the ratio was of the number of asylum applications to the number of staff processing those applications in each of the last three years.

Robert Jenrick:

The number of asylum decision makers, the total cost of managing asylum operations and productivity is published in table ASY_04 in the quarterly immigration and protection data:

Immigration and protection data: Q4 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The number of asylum applications in each year from 2001 – 2022 can be found in the ASY_D01 Tab of the published asylum and resettlement data table:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2022/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

The asylum system has been under mounting pressure for several years and we are taking immediate action to accelerate decision-making and streamline processes. We have already doubled our decision makers over the last 2 years, and we are continuing to recruit more.

■ **Fuel Oil: Theft**

Helen Morgan:

[162329]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) incidents of heating oil theft, (b) incidents resulting in a charge or summons for heating oil theft and (c) prosecutions for heating oil theft there have been in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the number of theft offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, and their investigative outcomes, including charges.

However, information on what is stolen is not routinely collected by the Home Office and prosecution data held by the Ministry of Justice cannot provide such breakdowns.

■ **Home Office: Consultants**

Emily Thornberry:

[158848]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) the National Crime Agency, (b) Border Force, (c) UK Visas and Immigration and (d) HM Passport Office in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to (A) her Department and (B) HM Treasury.

Chris Philp:

Home Office

CONSULTANCY	FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20	FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21	FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22
Customer Service (HMPO & UKVI)	£242,189	£4,025,283	£10,530,409
Border Force	£2,913,909	£2,517,582	£3,763,258

Following restructuring within the Home Office, HMPO and UKVI are now one entity called Customer Service and those separate business areas no longer exist.

Identifying whether any Home Office consultancy spending is related to the preparation of funding bids within the Home Office or to HM Treasury can only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because every single transaction would have to be investigated to identify if it related to the preparation of a funding bid.

National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency spend on external consultants for the last three financial years is as follows:

£	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	GRAND TOTAL
Consultant spend	11,213,361	12,946,149	13,096,441	37,255,950

This is a subset of the information provided in the audited Annual Report and Accounts.

The approximate cost of specialist support to the funding bid preparation is: FY19/20 - £600,000, FY20/21 - £300,000, FY21/22 - £200,000. These costs are included in the total figures set out in the table above.

■ **Jews: Iran**

Christian Wakeford:

[\[161447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral statement on Security Threat to UK-Based Journalists of 20 February 2023, Official Report columns 49-51, what recent discussions (a) she and (b) her Department have had with representatives of the Community Security Trust on potential threats to the Jewish community.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Security Minister recently met with representatives of the Community Security Trust on 27 February, for a very useful discussion on certain security issues affecting the Jewish community.

We recognise that the Community Security Trust remains a highly trusted and expert delivery partner of HMG, with considerable experience of providing protective security for the Jewish community.

Christian Wakeford:[\[161448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral statement on Security Threat to UK-Based Journalists of 20 February 2023, Official Report columns 49-51, what steps she is taking to help protect the safety of the Jewish community.

Tom Tugendhat:

We take any threat to the UK-based Jewish community extremely seriously. As the Security Minister said in this House on 20 February, we are taking significant steps to address the activities of the Iranian regime and its operatives in the UK – whether those activities are threatening the Jewish community or any individuals or organisations in this country. However, the community should be alert but not alarmed.

In April 2022, the then Home Secretary announced continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for 2022-23 (for £14 million) which provides protective security measures at various Jewish community sites. In November we circulated protective security messaging to charity Community Security Trust to help keep the Jewish community aware of the threat posed by Iran, and signpost towards the government's online security advice hubs.

More broadly, we take a proactive approach to countering the most acute forms of state-directed physical threats to individuals in the UK. Working through our police forces – both national and regional – as well as the agencies that support them, we seek to identify those communities and individuals who may be most at risk, and to provide them with the right protective security guidance, and other measures where appropriate.

■ Members: Correspondence**Steve McCabe:**[\[161217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence sent by her Department to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak on 28 February 2023, reference MPAM/0522035/23, what the technical issue mentioned in that correspondence was; what steps her Department plans to take to rectify that technical issue; and how many other applications have been affected by that technical issue as of 8 March 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

The overwhelming majority of applications do not require any technical assistance. Where an application has encountered an IT issue, the Operational Caseworking teams are able to escalate immediately to the relevant IT Support team. Although there have previously been some delays to resolving issues, substantial progress has been made in strengthening processes and procedures in this area, not only to fix the immediate issue affecting an application case, but also to proactively address any root cause technical issues, and fix them as they are identified.

With regard to the case referred to in the correspondence sent under MPAM/0522035/23, work continues to resolve the IT issue affecting this case so it can be progressed and concluded.

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

Damien Moore:

[\[160387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' recommendation not to ban the sale and possession of nitrous oxide for recreational use.

Chris Philp:

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) published their report on nitrous oxide on the 6 March, setting out the evidence as it currently stands and made seven recommendations.

The Government will consider the ACMD advice carefully along with any other available evidence, as appropriate, before deciding how to proceed.

■ Slavery

Caroline Lucas:

[\[158881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2023 to Question 148612 on Slavery, how the assurance function of the Multi-Agency Assurance Panels (MAAPs) is being carried out; what the timeline for the introduction of the remodelled assurance process is; if he will make it his policy to temporarily reinstate the MAAPs while the remodelled process is being developed; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

To reduce decision making delays in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), MAAPs were removed from the process in December 2022

All negative reasonable grounds and conclusive grounds decisions continue to require a second pair of eyes review by another caseworker or manager and the Competent Authorities continue to undertake internal assurance of both positive and negative Reasonable Grounds and Conclusive Grounds decisions.

The Home Office continues to give consideration towards an alternative process that can provide appropriate assurance and drive further improvements to NRM decision making in such a way that does not add time to service of outcomes.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**Local Broadcasting: Parliamentary Estate****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[160219\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission is taking steps to increase access to BBC regional channels on the parliamentary estate television network.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: BBC regional channels are now only transmitted in High Definition (HD) after Standard Definition (SD) transmission was withdrawn in February. Work to update the television system on the Parliamentary Estate to allow for the transmission of additional HD channels is planned for Easter and will restore access to BBC Regional Channels.

JUSTICE**Bail****Hilary Benn:**[\[158803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time taken by courts in England to deal with pre-charge bail extension applications was in the last 12 months.

Mike Freer:

Applications for pre-charge bail must be dealt with by the court as soon as practicable. Data about the average time taken to deal with such applications is not collated centrally and could only be determined at disproportionate cost.

Powers of Attorney: Applications**Damien Moore:**[\[160382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the time taken to process and register a power of attorney.

Mike Freer:

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) is currently advising customers to allow up to 20 weeks for a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) application to be processed, including the statutory four-week waiting period for lodging objections prior to registration. OPG's target is to register LPAs within an average of eight weeks. The current backlog resulted from Covid restrictions which reduced how many staff could be in the office to physically process LPAs which are currently paper-based documents.

Tackling the backlog is a priority for OPG. Staff are working overtime to register LPAs, extra staff have been hired, and process efficiencies have been introduced. These measures are starting to take effect and OPG remains committed to reducing

the waiting times that customers are experiencing. The government fully understands that delays are frustrating.

The government is supporting the Powers of Attorney Bill sponsored by Stephen Metcalfe MP. The Bill will enable a modernisation of the process for making and registering an LPA, bringing in a new digital channel and improving the paper one. This will create a faster and simpler service for customers and make the system more resilient to future disruption.

■ Prison Accommodation: West Midlands

Julian Knight:

[158970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department is taking steps to increase prison capacity in the West Midlands.

Damian Hinds:

Our number one priority is protecting the public and cutting crime by taking dangerous criminals off the streets.

To do this, we are committed to delivering 20,000 additional, modern prison places. This is the biggest prison build programme in a century, ensuring the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners and helping to cut crime to protect the public. In the West Midlands, we are delivering a major refurbishment at HMP Birmingham that includes a full refurbishment of A, B and C wings. The project will upgrade cells to safe standards along with supporting ancillaries to enable c.300 places to be brought back online.

■ Probation: Bureaucracy

Darren Jones:

[160359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the measures taken by his Department to reduce the workload pressures of Probation Service staff in the last 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

We have unified the Probation Service and injected extra funding of more than £155 million a year to deliver more robust supervision, reduce caseloads and recruit thousands more staff to keep the public safer. We exceeded our target to recruit 1,500 trainee probation offers in 2021/22 and we have committed to recruit a further 1,500 in 2022/23.

We continue to address workload pressures through recruitment and retention of staff. The first Probation Service Recruitment and Retention Strategy was published in April 2021. An update is due to be published in May 2023 and includes specific initiatives to deliver against our commitment to ensure manageable workloads for staff.

Recruitment of key operational roles has been centralised to accelerate recruitment in 6 priority regions, including London. There are schemes available to provide financial

support to incentivise new and existing staff to move permanently to areas with the most significant staffing challenges.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Domestic Abuse: Refuges

Tim Loughton:

[156032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance he has issued to providers of domestic violence refuges on the provision of single-sex facilities.

Felicity Buchan:

Further to the answer to UIN [117805](#), the Equality and Human Rights Commission provides guidance on provision of single sex services.

The Government's position is set out in the Home Office Statutory Guidance to accompany the Domestic Abuse Act 2021,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Angela Rayner:

[162191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with Select Committees on the review of the Voter Identification regulations in the May 2023 elections.

Angela Rayner:

[162192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government review of the impact of Voter Identification in the May 2023 local elections, whether the data collected to record the number of people turned away from polling stations will include data on those who arrive at a polling station without any form of photo ID.

Angela Rayner:

[162193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he expects the review into the impact of the Voter Identification policy in the May 2023 local elections to be published.

Dehenna Davison:

Departmental correspondence with the House of Lord's Constitution committee is published online and is readily available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), and with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee [here](#).

As set out last year by ministers to Parliament, we have "already committed to a review that will take place after the May elections. I can confirm our intention that the results of that review should be published no later than November 2023".

As set out in the Voter Identification Regulations 2022, which are readily available online at the following [link](#), staff at polling stations will collect data in accordance with paragraph 34 of those regulations.

■ **Flats: Battersea**

Marsha De Cordova: [160403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether a contract has been signed with contractors to start remediation work on unsafe cladding at 6 Hester House in Battersea constituency.

Lee Rowley:

A registration to the Building Safety Fund was made for Albion Riverside Building, 6 Hester Road, Battersea but in December 2020 it was assessed as ineligible for funding as it was below the height threshold. As it is ineligible for the Building Safety Fund, we do not hold information on works to the building.

■ **Future High Streets Fund**

Navendu Mishra: [162316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department intends to increase funding for Local Authorities with successful Future High Street bids agreed in 2021-22 to address the impact of trends in the level of inflation.

Dehenna Davison:

The department is continuing to respond to the challenges that inflation presents to our levelling up programmes, working closely with the places affected.

Our project change process gives places flexibility to re-scope projects and move funding within their Future High Streets Fund portfolio, allowing them to adapt to the changing economic climate and ensure that projects remain viable.

■ **Government Departments: York Central**

Rachael Maskell: [162223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to ensure (a) an increase in the completion of housing units in City of York Unitary Authority and (b) compliance with obligations in housing allocation figures.

Rachael Maskell: [162224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to consult over the plans for the Government Hub on the York Central development site to help ensure that the new building has a maximum level of uses.

Rachael Maskell: [162225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for the conferencing facilities in the

Government Hub in York to also have acoustic level concert facilities, enabling York to have a concert hall in a central location in the city.

Rachael Maskell:

[162226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the infrastructure levy will apply to developments in York Central constituency that have received outline planning permission as of 9 March 2023.

Rachael Maskell:

[162227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what level of community consultation, including with residents and businesses, are development partners appointed to bring forward sites, such as York Central, expected to undertake.

Rachel Maclean:

As set out previously, the Government has been examining ways to incentivise the prompt build-out of permitted housing sites and to support councils to act against those who fail to meet these commitments. Through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, we are requiring housing developers to notify local authorities, via a Development Commencement Notice, when they commence development. We will also modernise and streamline existing powers for local authorities to serve completions notices.

The Housing Delivery Test holds local authorities to account for their role in housing delivery and encourages them to take an active role in delivering more homes.

The proposed Government Hub at York Central is progressing through detailed design. A public consultation was held in November 2022. The Infrastructure Levy will apply to permissions that are granted once a local authority has introduced it in their area. For planning permissions granted prior to this date, the existing system of Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy will apply.

On community consultation, I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [142761](#) on 23 February 2023.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Matthew Pennycook:

[162247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many developers that signed the building safety repairs pledge have been provided with the execution copy of the developer remediation contract as of 8 March 2023.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon. Member to the following [link](#).

■ High Rise Flats: Leeds

Hilary Benn:

[158802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his oral contribution of 30 January 2023, Official Report, column 54, on Cartier House,

the Gateway and the Drive, Saxton Gardens, what progress he has made investigating the position of those buildings.

Lee Rowley:

[Holding answer 9 March 2023]: Cartier House As set out in our answer to Question UIN 117474 on 11 January 2023, the department has issued a short form funding agreement on 31 October 2022 for £581,274 from the Building Safety Fund to the applicant for Cartier House for 'pre-tender support'. Pre-tender support is advance funding to enable the applicant to develop their project. The applicant has yet to sign and return the short form funding agreement which would allow the project to progress.

Saxton Gardens This building did not meet the eligibility criteria for the first tranche of the Building Safety Fund but has reapplied for the reopened Fund. This application was submitted to the Department on 17 February 2023 and is undergoing technical assessment.

The Gateway Three of the four blocks in the Gateway development met the eligibility criteria for the Building Safety Fund and have been approved £18,637,639 -----funding. The applicant has subsequently applied through the reopened Fund for works that will cover the whole of the development. The application is currently being considered.

■ **Housing: Construction**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[159111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the availability of self-build mortgages.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department regularly monitors the mortgage market. In response to availability of affordable mortgage finance within the self and custom build market the Government has introduced the Help to Build scheme. The scheme provides access to low deposit mortgages and improves affordability of home ownership for people who want to build their own homes.

■ **Housing: Disability**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[158987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 February 2023 to Question 142735 on Housing: Disability, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to encourage estate agents to publish information on whether properties they are selling are accessible for wheelchair users.

Lee Rowley:

Departmental officials work with housing stakeholders who are considering the question of market place visibility of wheelchair-accessible homes. There are other stakeholders working on compiling their own registers of accessible housing.

■ Infrastructure Levy

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[160347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish research commissioned by his Department from the University of Liverpool on the implications of the new infrastructure levy as provided for by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is intending to publish a consultation on the detailed operation of the Infrastructure Levy shortly. This will be accompanied by the University of Liverpool research report.

■ Infrastructure: Taxation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[159011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he expects the Infrastructure Levy to be introduced.

Rachel Maclean:

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill provides powers for the Government to introduce the Infrastructure Levy. The Bill is currently in the House of Lords.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Urban Areas

Tim Farron:

[\[158867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what proportion of projects that received money from the Levelling Up Fund: Round 2 aim to improve local high streets.

Dehenna Davison:

As set out in the published [thematic and geographic analysis](#), Over £760 million of funding was awarded to projects under the regeneration and town centres theme, with a further £120 million awarded to projects where funding is split evenly between regeneration and town centre interventions and other themes.

■ Migrants: Hong Kong

Julian Knight:

[\[158967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the level of support available to people from Hong Kong who have moved to the UK.

Felicity Buchan:

In 2021, the Department launched a UK-wide Welcome Programme to support Hong Kong BN(O) status holders to settle in the UK, and has recently announced continued funding for 2023/24. The Programme continues to provide a comprehensive support package with an easily accessible universal offer as its foundation, progressing to targeted support for those most in need.

The universal offer is open to all BN(O) visa holders in the UK and includes a network of 12 virtual Welcome Hubs across the UK, funding for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver national and regional projects and a comprehensive Welcome Pack on GOV.UK. The Programme also funds targeted support provided by local authorities in England on a demand-led basis for those BN(O) individuals who require additional assistance with English language or where there is a risk of destitution.

■ Private Rented Housing

Justin Madders:

[158985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of private rental properties in England in each year since 2014.

Rachel Maclean:

According to the most recent English Housing Survey, there were an estimated 4.33 million occupied dwellings within the private rented sector in 2021-22, compared to 4.02 million in 2013-14. Full stock tables for each year are available online at the following [link](#).

■ Rented Housing: Expenditure

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[159081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to reduce the cost of renting for (a) private and (b) social tenants.

Rachel Maclean:

Reforming the private rented sector remains a top priority for this Government, and we will bring forward legislation as soon as we can within this Parliament. Our White Paper, 'A Fairer Private Rented Sector', published in June 2022, sets out our plans to end arbitrary rent review clauses, only allow one rent increase per year, improve tenants' ability to challenge excessive rent increases through the First-Tier Tribunal, and enable tenants to be repaid rent for non-decent homes.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the social housing rent cap would be set at 7% for 2023-24. The cap was set at 7% as it strikes an appropriate balance between protecting social tenants from high rent increases and ensuring that Registered Providers of social housing are able to continue to invest in new and existing social housing and provide decent homes and services to tenants.

■ Social Rented Housing: Standards

Rachael Maskell:

[159000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) issuing guidance to local authorities on national minimum standards for social housing (i) developments and (ii) services and (b)

creating an independent regulator to provide assurance that those standards are being met.

Rachael Maskell: [\[159001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to monitor the performance of local authorities in delivering (a) planning and (b) housing services.

Rachael Maskell: [\[159010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that development partners' economic impact assessments for development proposals are required to take into account the potential economic impact of the proposed development on the wider locality.

Rachael Maskell: [\[159012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timetable is for the (a) review of the National Planning Policy Framework and (b) publication of guidance arising from that review.

Dehenna Davison:

Local authority social housing landlords are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Regarding planning, our proposals for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) closed 2 March 2023. We intend to publish an update in due course after considering the comments we received. The NPPF is clear that Local Planning Authorities should work with planning applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic conditions of the area.

As set out in the December NPPF consultation, this Government will consult on a wider review of the Framework later this year.

We currently monitor the effectiveness of local authority planning departments in the speed and quality of decision-making. We are consulting on proposals to introduce a new planning performance framework that monitors the effectiveness of local authority planning across a broader set of metrics.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Broadband: Hendon

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[161268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to help provide fast and reliable broadband throughout Hendon constituency.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[161269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to provide gigabit-capable broadband in hard-to-reach communities in Hendon constituency.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[161270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to attract private investment for gigabit broadband.

Julia Lopez:

More than 99% of premises in Hendon have access to Superfast broadband speeds (≥ 30 Mbps) and over 69% can access gigabit-capable broadband. This is up from just 12% in March 2019, and is expected to increase as we support suppliers to expand their networks.

We introduced measures in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022 to specifically assist telecoms operators providing broadband services, such as an increased ability to upgrade and share the existing duct and pole network and a procedure to deal with non-responsive landowners. This is in addition to the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Act 2021, which makes it easier for broadband operators to install in multiple dwelling units where the landlord is repeatedly unresponsive to requests for access.

We have also taken steps to ensure that new homes are built with fast, reliable broadband. On 26 December 2022, new regulations came into force making it mandatory for new homes in England to be future-proofed with gigabit-ready physical infrastructure and - where they can be provided within a cost cap - gigabit-capable connections. This will help ensure that many more new households each year get the connectivity they want and need without costly and disruptive installation work after the home is built.

For premises that are not included in suppliers' commercial plans, we are delivering Project Gigabit, which is focused on bringing gigabit-capable broadband to hard-to-reach areas across the UK. There are high levels of commercial coverage within the borough of Barnet, and we are reviewing this commercial coverage prior to identifying what support could be provided through Project Gigabit.

Attracting private investment and incentivising competition in the fixed telecoms market is integral to the government's strategy to deliver nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable broadband. Through the 2018 Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR) and the 2019 Statement of Strategic Priorities (SSP), we brought forward substantive proposals to make it easier for new firms to enter the market and compete with the incumbent provider, such as granting competitors access to Openreach's national network of ducts and poles. The SSP gave Ofcom a strategic priority to incentivise private investment and market competition by providing long-term regulatory stability. This approach has been successful – the UK fixed telecoms market now has over 80 companies investing c.£35 billion in its networks.

■ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Departmental Responsibilities

Rachael Maskell:

[159115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what (a) priorities and (b) targets she has for her Department's work; and what factors she took into consideration when identifying those priorities and targets.

George Freeman:

On March 6th, the Department published the [Science and Technology Framework](#), which sets out the Government's goals and vision for science and technology in an enduring framework that will see us through to 2030. The Framework has been developed in close collaboration with the UK science and technology sector, and is the strategic framework that government policy will deliver against, and which the government will hold itself accountable to.

Later this year, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will publish its Outcome Delivery Plan. This will include the Department's priority outcomes, associated delivery plans, metrics to track progress and key risks.

■ Horizon Europe

Chi Onwurah:

[158905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to The UK Science and Technology Framework published on 6 March 2023, for what reason that Framework does not discuss or include references to associating to Horizon Europe.

George Freeman:

Alongside the UK Science and Technology Framework, the Government announced an extension to the support provided to Horizon Europe applicants until 30 June 2023. This will ensure that eligible, successful UK applicants will continue to be guaranteed funding. Further information is on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/horizon-europe-guarantee-scheme-extension-to-support-uk-rd>.

Following the announcement of the Windsor Framework, the Government welcomes the EU's recent openness to discussions on research collaboration following two years of delays, and we continue to be ready to work swiftly and constructively together on a range of issues including UK association.

■ Industry: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[159112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to help ensure that progress on the development of industrial clusters of economic excellence is measured; and what funding is (a) available and (b) planned for these clusters.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[159114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she plans to publish a strategy for her Department on (a) growing economic clusters and (b) engaging with local stakeholders.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[159116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding the Government (a) has provided and (b) plans to provide in the next two years to support the development of clusters of innovative research and development firms.

George Freeman:

Strengthening clusters is a top priority for building our Innovation Nation. More places hosting world-leading and globally connected innovation clusters will create more jobs, productivity and growth. By September, we will publish an interactive digital tool that will map these clusters, helping us attract investment and inform future policy.

Several programmes, all closely involving local stakeholders, already support innovation clusters. For example, we are investing £100m to pilot Innovation Accelerators in three city regions, helping them become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation, and the Investment Zones programme will catalyse some of the highest potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters.

■ Innovation and Research: Higher Education

Rachael Maskell:

[\[159117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to help ensure that research programmes based in universities integrate with innovations from her Department.

George Freeman:

There are a wide range of policy interventions to ensure that the knowledge generated in universities has impact in the economy, for example:

The Government invests £280m a year in Higher Education Innovation Funding to support knowledge exchange between universities, business and other partners. Similarly, the Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research (ICURe) programme supports researchers to commercialise their research, and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), funded through Innovate UK, offer early career researchers the opportunity to work, with business on innovative projects.

Research England are currently conducting a review these knowledge exchange programmes, to ensure that they meet the needs of participants, support government objectives and fit together coherently.

■ Science and Technology: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[158904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the written statement entitled Science and Technology Update, made on 6 March 2023, how much the Government will invest in the research cloud pilot, and what start and end dates that pilot will have.

George Freeman:

Data access and data use underpins economic growth, unlocks scientific research, adoption of innovations and drives productivity.

The Government is investing £5.29 million in a 2 year pilot that will be delivered in partnership with UKRI.

TRANSPORT

■ A5: Accidents

Alberto Costa:

[\[158995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) slight collisions, (b) serious collisions and (c) fatalities which have been recorded on the section of the A5 between the junctions located at Junction 1 of the M69 and at the A4304 in each year since 2020.

Mr Richard Holden:

The number of collisions on the A5 between the junctions located at Junction 1 of the M69 and at the A4304 as reported by the police via the STATS19 system is shown in the table.

YEAR	SLIGHT COLLISIONS	SERIOUS COLLISIONS	FATALITIES
2010	7	2	0
2011	9	2	1
2012	6	3	1
2013	6	0	0
2014	7	3	2
2015	8	2	3
2016	8	1	1
2017	5	0	0
2018	4	2	0

YEAR	SLIGHT COLLISIONS	SERIOUS COLLISIONS	FATALITIES
2019	11	2	2
2020	2	0	0
2021	5	2	1

■ **Avanti West Coast: Standards**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[162317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of Avanti West Coast trains were cancelled between Stockport and London Euston in the last six months.

Huw Merriman:

The Department does not routinely collect this information centrally as this is the responsibility of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). Their latest published data on train cancellations can be found on the ORR website.

■ **Buses and Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**

Julian Knight:

[\[158973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help (a) retain bus, coach and HGV drivers and (b) encourage the return of former drivers to the sector.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government recognises the important contribution that professional drivers make to the nation, the economy, and business.

The Government is supporting the training of new HGV drivers through Apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps but recognises that more needs to be done to retain drivers. Lorry drivers will soon benefit from improved roadside facilities and safer rest areas thanks to up to £100 million investment from industry and Government via the 'HGV parking and welfare grant scheme' and National Highways funding to improve roadside facilities.

In November 2022, the Department and Confederation of Passenger Transport (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.

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

Julian Knight:

[\[158966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has provided to increase the number of zero-emission buses in the latest period for which data is available.

Mr Richard Holden:

Nationally the Government has committed to support for 4,000 zero emission buses. Across the UK, an estimated 3,452 Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs) have been funded so far.

During this Parliament we have provided £345 million of dedicated funding for Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs) in England (outside London).

In addition, the Department for Transport has provided funding to Transport for London (TfL) that has enabled TfL to introduce hundreds of ZEBs.

Gavin Newlands:

[\[161317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2022 to Question 99878 on Buses: Exhaust Emissions, what recent estimate he has made of the total amount of funding allocated to local transport authorities under the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme where the procurement process has not yet been completed.

Mr Richard Holden:

£270 million funding was awarded from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme to 17 local transport authorities.

In March 2023 the Department announced an additional £25.3m funding to four local areas for an additional 117 zero emission buses.

Once funding has been awarded the procurement of buses will be undertaken by either local transport authorities or bus operators.

Please see below Table 1 which presents information on how much funding each local transport authority received from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme and whether buses have been ordered. The numbers in Table 1 are not official statistics: they are based on the latest publicly available information and are therefore subject to change.

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING AWARDED	NUMBER OF ZEBs	ZEB STATUS	
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority	£4,200,000	30	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING AWARDED	NUMBER OF ZEBs	ZEB STATUS	
				transport authority or bus operator.
Kent County Council	£9,500,000	33	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Leicester City Council	£19,000,000	96	90 ordered on the road 6 on	6 buses on the road supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong 90 buses ordered from Wrightbus
Milton Keynes City Council	£16,600,000	56	Funded	Following the operator's withdrawal of support, the Department is working closely with Milton Keynes City Council to determine next steps.
Warrington Borough Council	£21,400,000	105	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
South Yorkshire Combined	£8,400,000	27	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING AWARDED	NUMBER OF ZEBs	ZEB STATUS	
Authority				outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Norfolk County Council	£14,800,000	70	70 Ordered	Wrightbus
North Yorkshire County Council	£7,800,000	39	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Portsmouth City Council & Hampshire County Council	£12,800,000	62	62 Ordered	Wrightbus
Blackpool Council	£19,600,000	115	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Nottingham City Council	£15,200,000	78	12 ordered 66 funded	12 buses supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong. Bus manufacturer for 66 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING AWARDED	NUMBER OF ZEBs	ZEB STATUS	
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£35,700,000	170	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Hertfordshire County Council	£5,600,000	27	Funded	Following the operator's withdrawal of support, the Department is working closely with Hertfordshire County Council Council to determine next steps.
West Midlands Combined Authority	£30,400,000	124	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
City of York Council	£10,300,000	53	53 Ordered	Wrightbus
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	£30,300,000	136	57 ordered	57 buses ordered from Wrightbus Bus manufacturer for 79 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING AWARDED	NUMBER OF ZEBs	ZEB STATUS	
Oxfordshire County Council	£32,800,000	159	159 Ordered	104 buses ordered from Wrightbus. 55 buses ordered from Alexander Dennis Limited.

■ Connect Plus: Litter

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial penalties are in place in the 30-year contract with Connect Plus M25 in relation to litter-related performance.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Design Build Finance and Operate (DBFO) contract with Connect Plus M25 does not outline that financial deductions can be made in relation to litter clearance.

However, where Connect Plus M25 is in breach of its contractual obligations, it may be issued performance points. If points are accrued in sufficient numbers, contractual sanctions and financial implications for Connect Plus M25 are possible.

■ Cycling: Helmets

Dan Carden:

[\[159091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons the Government will not make it a legal requirement for cyclists to wear helmets.

Dan Carden:

[\[159092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure young people wear helmets on bicycles.

Jesse Norman:

The Department recommends that all cyclists wear helmets, as set out in The Highway Code, and particularly encourages children to wear helmets.

Helmet wearing is strongly advised in the Bikeability programme and school children are taught the correct way to fit them. A 2018 safety review considered mandating helmet wearing for all cyclists but concluded that this would deter many people from cycling and therefore any safety benefits would undermine wider health and environmental benefits.

■ Department for Transport: Consultants**Emily Thornberry:****[158841]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) High Speed Two Ltd., (b) Network Rail and (c) National Highways in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to (A) his Department and (B) HM Treasury.

Jesse Norman:

Spending on external consultants by High Speed Two Ltd, Network Rail and National Highways is published in the DfT Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dft-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

There has been no spend on external consultants by High Speed Two Ltd, Network Rail and National Highways relating to the preparation of funding bids to the department or HM Treasury.

■ DP World: Contracts**Dan Carden:****[159035]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total value is of (a) contracts and (b) vessel purchases made between his Department and companies owned by DP World in the period since 17 March 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

None.

■ Ferries: Crew**Angela Rayner:****[158946]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the number of UK-resident ratings employed in the ferry industry.

Mr Richard Holden:

Measures such as the amendments to the national minimum wage and the points-based visa system will increase opportunities for UK seafarers in the UK domestic market and set a minimum salary level.

We remain committed to the training of ratings. A range of apprenticeships are available for UK ratings, all have been established over recent years. Apprenticeships policy is devolved so there are different ratings apprenticeships available in England and Scotland. In England, Able Seafarer (Deck), Maritime Electrical/Mechanical Mechanic and Maritime Caterer are offered. In Scotland, Deck Rating, Engine Room Rating and Hospitality with Maritime Enhancements are available.

The Department has also asked the Maritime Skills Commission to undertake a Ratings Review to assess the current situation for UK ratings training. The Review is currently underway.

■ **M54: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mark Pritchard:

[\[158862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will hold discussions with Highways England on improving drainage on the M54 motorway in Shropshire.

Mr Richard Holden:

I meet with National Highways regularly and will be happy to discuss any issues on the M54 motorway in Shropshire. National Highways are aware of minor recurring issues with drainage between the slip roads at M54 junction 3 on the eastbound carriageway, and the catch pit covers affecting both carriageways between junctions 3 to 4, and 6 to 7. These issues are present in extremely heavy rainfall, however, these locations are not recorded as flooding hotspots. These are recurring issues as they are prone to becoming blocked by straw blown off agricultural transport which uses this route very regularly.

National Highways regard the drainage system on the M54 as fit for purpose, and a routine maintenance regime is now in place to address the recurring issues on the route.

■ **Motorways: Litter**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of National Highways' performance on their legal duty to ensure the motorways are kept clear of litter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

The second Road Investment Strategy (2020-25) includes a litter performance indicator. National Highways is committed to reporting in line with the Code of practice on litter and refuse published by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In 2021/22 National Highways reported that 60.8% of relevant parts of the Strategic Road Network had no litter, refuse or detritus, or was predominately free of litter, refuse or detritus apart from some small items.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Office of Rail and Road's monitoring of National Highways performance on keeping the motorways clear of litter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

In line with its role set out in the Infrastructure Act (2015), the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) monitors the performance and efficiency of National Highways in delivering its five year Road Investment Strategy, including against the performance indicator on litter volumes. The ORR provides advice regularly to the Department on National Highways' performance, and reports annually to Parliament. Reporting includes consideration of National Highways' performance against its litter performance

indicator. The Department is confident that the monitoring work carried out by the ORR is adequate and in line with its functions as set out in the Act.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to the Answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 82246, on Motorways: Litter, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of including National Highways' legal duty to ensure the motorways are kept clear of litter as a separate high-level Key Performance Indicator in the Third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) performance specification.

Mr Richard Holden:

As part of developing the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3), we continue to explore potential metrics for inclusion in RIS3 performance specification, as well as possible improvements to existing metrics such as litter. We are working to ensure that the targeted metrics in RIS3 – the Key Performance Indicators focus on the things that are most important to road users and contribute to wider government priorities. This process will involve considering the responses to the forthcoming public consultation on National Highways' SRN Initial Report.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[158838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to the Answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 82246, on Motorways: Litter, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that National Highways meets its legal duty to ensure the motorways are kept clear of litter ahead of the commencement of the Third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) performance specification in 2025.

Mr Richard Holden:

As sent out in National Highways' Litter Strategy, both the Department and National Highways recognise that more can be done to combat litter along motorways, and together we are working to achieve this in a number of ways. This includes working with National Highways to maintain continuous improvement in its partnership working with Local Authorities and working to trial and implement evidence-based anti-littering campaigns on and near motorways to positively influence littering behaviour. The Office of Rail and Road monitors National Highways' performance against its litter performance indicator.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[161256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with National Highways on keeping motorways clear of litter in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department works closely with National Highways to combat roadside litter along our motorways and considers National Highways performance against its litter performance indicator. However, specific regional operational matters are the responsibility of National Highways and relevant local duty bodies.

■ **P&O Ferries: Redundancy**

Angela Rayner:

[\[158949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an estimate of how many seafarers unlawfully dismissed by P&O Ferries on 17 March 2022 have taken up employment outside the maritime sector.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport does not hold this information.

■ **Parking: Databases**

Ben Everitt:

[\[161443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take steps to launch a communications campaign to increase awareness of the national parking platform in local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Ben Everitt:

[\[161444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of local authorities adopting the National Parking Platform.

Mr Richard Holden:

My department recognises the importance of the National Parking Platform which is why we have provided £800,000 to fund the pilot in Manchester. We are considering the governance and funding models to roll a national parking platform out nationwide. The department commissioned user research to identify the potential benefits and continues to work closely with the parking sector to promote local authority awareness.

■ **Public Transport: Seating**

Damien Moore:

[\[160392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to make sure that priority seats on public transport are given to the members of public who need them in situations when they are not offered or are declined to be given up.

Mr Richard Holden:

Priority seating is important in enabling many disabled people to travel confidently and, as set out in the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000, it must be provided onboard buses.

It is for operators to determine how drivers assist passengers who require a priority seat, but they are subject to the Equality Act 2010, and must also ensure staff receive suitable training. The Government's REAL training package can support operators to ensure staff understand the needs and rights of disabled passengers.

■ Railways: North of England

Damien Moore: [\[160390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce train cancellations in the north of England.

Huw Merriman:

Ministers, the Department, and Rail North Partnership Officials regularly meet with the senior management of Network Rail and operators to review performance. We are holding them to account for matters within their control and will continue to use all contractual levers to drive the best outcomes for passengers.

■ Roads: Litter

Sir Mike Penning: [\[158836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fines for littering have been issued by National Highways and its predecessors since 1 January 2013.

Mr Richard Holden:

National Highways is not an enforcement organisation and so does not have the powers to issue fines for littering or other offences.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[158839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish National Highways most recent litter survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Richard Holden:

In 2021/22 National Highways reported that 60.8% of relevant parts of the Strategic Road Network had no litter, refuse or detritus, or was predominately free of litter, refuse or detritus apart from some small items, per the Code of practice on litter and refuse. This is the most recent data available. This data is indicative of the motorways and major A-roads network over a year.

■ Shipping: Apprentices

Angela Rayner: [\[158948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Seafarer Statistics published by his department on 28 February 2023, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) provision and (b) uptake of seafarer apprenticeships.

Mr Richard Holden:

There are a wide range of apprenticeships available across the maritime and marine sectors. These include seafaring apprenticeships for Able Seafarer Deck, Maritime Electrical/Mechanical Mechanic, Maritime Caterer and Officer of the Watch (Near Coastal). All have been developed in recent years.

The Department continues to work with the Maritime Skills Alliance and maritime stakeholders on the development and promotion of maritime apprenticeships and

with the Careers Taskforce and Merchant Navy Training Board on the promotion of maritime careers at sea.

■ **Shipping: Equality**

Angela Rayner:

[\[158947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Government Equalities Office on the Equality Act 2010 (Work on Ships and Hovercraft) Regulations 2011.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has not had any recent discussions with the Government Equalities Office that relate to this legislation.

■ **Shipping: Pay**

Angela Rayner:

[\[158945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the impact that prohibiting nationality based pay discrimination would have on seafarer (a) welfare and (b) employment conditions in the shipping industry since 17 March 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department is in the process of conducting a Post Implementation Review of the Equality Act 2010 (Work on Ships and Hovercraft) Regulations 2011. This will include an analysis of nationality-based pay discrimination and the potential effects of eliminating it within UK jurisdiction.

■ **TransPennine Express: Standards**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[162318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many TransPennine Express trains have been delayed for more than 15 minutes since 1 January 2023.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[162319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many TransPennine Express trains have been cancelled due to staff shortages since 1 January 2023.

Huw Merriman:

The Department does not routinely collect this information centrally as this is the responsibility of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). Their latest published data on train cancellations can be found on the ORR website.

TREASURY■ **Bureaux de Change****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[162328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to bring currency services into the scope of the Financial Ombudsman Service.

Andrew Griffith:

The Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) can only consider cases which fall within its compulsory or voluntary jurisdiction. The FOS compulsory jurisdiction covers regulated activities being undertaken by firms authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The voluntary jurisdiction includes firms which have voluntarily agreed to be subject to FOS processes and decisions where they do not already fall within the compulsory jurisdiction.

Providing currency exchange services is not an FCA regulated activity, and so is not automatically within scope of the compulsory jurisdiction of the FOS. However, some payment services can involve some element of currency exchange services (for example, when making an online purchase in a foreign currency, using a payment card, or withdrawing foreign cash from an ATM). As payment services are regulated activities, and payment service providers are FCA authorised, these services will fall within scope of the FOS.

The jurisdiction of the FOS and what complaints it can deal with are determined by the FCA and set out in the FCA Handbook. The FCA is operationally independent from Government.

■ **Coking Coal: Imports****Mark Jenkinson:**[\[160425\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much coking coal was imported in each quarter of 2022 by country of origin; and what was the value of the imports by country of origin.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly, as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), which is available on their dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com). From this website, it is possible to build your own data tables based upon bespoke search criteria.

The quantity and value of coking coal imported by country of origin in 2022 appears in the table found here: <https://www.uktradeinfo.com/trade-data/latest-bulk-datasets/>.

■ Credit Unions: Regulation

Catherine West:

[\[162248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prudential Regulation Authority's consultation paper entitled CP7/22 – Credit Unions: Changes to the Regulatory Regime, published 21 September 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a 50 per cent cap on interest-bearing deferred shares on (a) the ability of the sector to raise capital and (b) access to finance for financially excluded consumers.

Catherine West:

[\[162249\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold discussions with the Prudential Regulation Authority on the potential merits of making an assessment of the proposal for a 50 per cent cap on interest-bearing deferred shares.

Catherine West:

[\[162250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the policy statement by the Prudential Regulation Authority entitled CP7/22 – Credit Unions: Changes to the Regulatory Regime, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the restrictions to capital investment in credit unions set out in that paper on trends in the levels of growth in the credit union sector.

Andrew Griffith:

The Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) is an independent, non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry, including credit unions. Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of credit unions, it has limited powers in relation to the PRA's decision-making processes, including any proposed changes as part of their sectoral consultation work.

Regulators are obligated to provide a cost benefit analysis on any proposed changes and an estimate of those costs and benefits if reasonable. This consultation paper includes a cost-benefit analysis; the PRA estimates that any costs are, overall, proportionate to the additional risks involved.

The Government is a strong supporter of the mutuals sector and recognises the unique role credit unions play in their communities, providing savings and affordable loans to their members. As part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill, the Government is bringing forward changes to the Credit Unions Act 1979 to allow credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services. This will allow credit unions to continue to grow sustainably in the future and support them in the vital role they play in financial inclusion.

■ Debt Respite Scheme

Dan Carden:

[\[162269\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the length of legal protections under the Debt respite (breathing space) scheme.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government launched the Breathing Space scheme on 4 May 2021, and as of January 2023, over 110,000 people in problem debt have benefited from Breathing Space protections.

As part of the consultation on the Statutory Debt Repayment Plan (SDRP), the Government proposed minor technical changes to Breathing Space and invited views on what further changes could be made. The Government is considering these proposals and will provide a further update in due course.

■ Delivery Services: Self-employed**Sir Greg Knight:****[160214]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of delivery drivers operating in the UK who are not registered as being self-employed and who are evading paying income tax; what steps he is taking to address that issue; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is committed in tackling non-compliance across all areas of the economy and tax system, including those who fail to register for and pay the taxes they owe. It continues to support HMRC with the resources and technology it needs to transform the way it approaches and tackles non-compliance.

HMRC proactively obtains a range of third-party data to identify undeclared sources of income including online intermediaries and card payment providers, and carries out a range of compliance interventions as a result.

Some delivery drivers will be employees and will be registered with HMRC under Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system.

■ Financial Services Compensation Scheme**Greg Smith:****[162303]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the value of compensation awarded under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme in each financial year since 2018-19.

Andrew Griffith:

The overall cost of compensation awarded by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme for the years in question can be found in its Annual Reports and Accounts, which are published here: <https://www.fscs.org.uk/industry-resources/annual-report-archive/> and <https://www.fscs.org.uk/news/fscs-news/annual-report/>.

In 2021/22, the last year for which numbers have been published, the cost was £584 million.

■ Foreign Companies: Registration

Dame Margaret Hodge: [160101]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many legitimate interest trust data requests were (a) received and (b) responded to by HMRC following the introduction of the Register of Overseas Entities in August 2022.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [160102]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many offshore company trust data requests were (a) received and (b) responded to by HMRC following the introduction of the Register of Overseas Entities in August 2022.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [160103]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average response time to legitimate interest trust data requests has been since the introduction of the Register of Overseas Entities in August 2022.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [160104]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average response time to offshore company trust data requests has been since the introduction of the Register of Overseas Entities in August 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

Since 1 September 2022, information on the beneficial ownership of trusts held by HMRC's Trust Registration Service is accessible to organisations or persons who can demonstrate a 'legitimate interest' in the trust information as part of an investigation into a specified suspected instance of money laundering or terrorist financing; or where the trust holds a controlling interest in an offshore company. The Government believes that this process strikes the appropriate balance between the right of privacy and the vital public interest of assisting those investigating money laundering and terrorist financing

The trust data request process only applies to trust information held on the Trust Registration Service. The process cannot be used to obtain trust information held on the Register of Overseas Entities unless that same information is separately held on the Trust Registration Service.

Interested parties have been able to submit trust data requests to HMRC since 1 September 2022. HMRC takes data protection seriously and assesses each request to ensure that information is only released where it is appropriate to do so. Further information on how HMRC handles trust data requests can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/trust-registration-service-manual/trsm60060>.

■ Landlords: Tax Allowances**Justin Madders:**[\[158984\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of section 24 of the Finance Act 2015 on the (a) availability of private rental housing stock and (b) rental prices.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government implemented a set of reforms to restrict finance cost relief to the equivalent of the basic rate of income tax to address unfairness and make sure that all landlords are treated the same.

To minimise the impact on landlords who are affected, the Government chose to act in a proportionate and gradual way. The restriction was announced almost two years before its implementation and was phased in over four years to give landlords time to adjust to the changes.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review.

■ Orchestras: Tax Allowances**Patrick Grady:**[\[162221\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the increased Orchestral Tax Relief beyond April 2023.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government recognises the value of the UK's world leading creative industries and arts sectors.

Since orchestra tax relief (OTR) was introduced in 2016, £62 million has been paid out in support of 2,640 productions as of the year 2021-2022.

At Autumn Budget 2021, the Government temporarily increased the headline rate of OTR in recognition of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sectors.

The Government acknowledges the concerns of industry about the upcoming taper of the rate in April, and will keep this under review.

■ PAYE**Stephen Morgan:**[\[162286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of HMRC's enforcement of agency regulations collecting PAYE tax from agencies who have had registered contractors.

John Glen:

The UK Government and devolved administrations agreed an Apprenticeship Levy funding deal, based on population share.

Under this agreement, the UK Government uplifted Spending Review 2015 settlements as set out in Block Grant Transparency to ensure the devolved

administrations received a full population share of forecast Levy funding from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This population share amounted to £1.3 billion across all three devolved administrations over the three-year period, with £460 million allocated in 2019-20.

Beyond 2019-20, it was agreed that the normal operation of the population-based Barnett formula would deliver a similarly fair outcome rather than a bespoke arrangement being required.

The devolved administrations received record settlements at the 2021 Spending Review and are well funded to deliver devolved responsibilities. Those settlements are still growing in real terms this year, and over the three-year spending review period, despite inflation being higher than expected.

It is for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their funding in devolved areas.

■ Treasury: Consultants

Emily Thornberry:

[158844]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) HMRC, (b) the National Infrastructure Commission and (b) the UK Debt Management Office in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022; and whether any of that spending related to the preparation of funding bids to his Department.

James Cartlidge:

In line with the Cabinet Office's control framework for consultancy, external advisers provide HMRC, the National Infrastructure Commission and the UK Debt Management Office with specialist expertise to help with delivering strategic objectives and major programmes through consultancy contracting frameworks where necessary.

a) HMRC

The information requested is published in the HMRC Annual Report and Accounts on GOV.UK at the links below:

- [HMRC Annual Report and Accounts 2019 to 2020](#)
- [HMRC Annual Report and Accounts 2020 to 2021](#)
- [HMRC Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022](#)

b) The National Infrastructure Commission

The information requested is published within the 'Other expenditure' line within the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure at the links below:

- [NIC Annual Report and Accounts 2019 to 2020](#)
- [NIC Annual Report and Accounts 2020 to 2021](#)
- [NIC Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022](#)

c) The UK Debt Management Office

The information requested is published in the Debt Management Office Annual Report and Accounts on GOV.UK at the links below:

- [DMO Annual Report and Accounts 2019 to 2020](#)
- [DMO Annual Report and Accounts 2020 to 2021](#)
- [DMO Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022](#)

None of the spending on consultancy by HMRC, the National Infrastructure Commission or the UK Debt Management Office related to the preparation of funding bids to HM Treasury.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Government Equalities Office: Public Expenditure

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147163\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will publish the Government Equalities Office's (a) budget and (b) programme of work for (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147164\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what her timescale is for the publication of Government Equalities Office annual accounts for (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147165\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an estimate of the number of ministerial hours spent on Government Equalities Office business in 2022.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147166\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the decrease in annual budget of the Government Equalities Office from £47 million in 2014-15 to £18 million in 2019-20 on the outcomes of that Office.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147167\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many full-time staff are permanently employed by the Government Equalities Office.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147168\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will publish the Race Disparity Unit's (a) budget and (b) programme of work for (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[147169\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will publish the Equality Hub's (a) budget and (b) programme of work for (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23.

Maria Caulfield:

The Equality Hub was formed by bringing together four units: the Disability Unit, Government Equalities Office, Race Disparity Unit, and the Social Mobility Commission secretariat. It is part of the Cabinet Office, and as such its annual accounts and priorities are published through their annual reporting. These are set out below:

The Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts:

- 2020-21: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002878/15640_CO_Annual_Report_2020_2021_digital_temp.pdf,
- 2021-22: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-22>.
- 2022-23: The annual report and accounts for 2022-23 will be published after the end of the financial year.

The Cabinet Office Outcome Delivery Plan:

- 2021-22: setting out the Equality Hub (including GEO and RDU) priorities is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-outcome-delivery-plan/cabinet-office-outcome-delivery-plan-2021-to-2022#improving-levels-of-equality-across-the-uk>.
- The Outcome Delivery Plan for the next period is being prepared.

The work of the Equality Hub is also scrutinised by the Women and Equalities Select Committee. The Hub provides financial and staffing information when requested, most recently here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/34198/documents/188113/default/>

■ Guide Dogs**Sarah Olney:****[157683]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will meet Guide Dogs UK to discuss improving access to local businesses for guide dog owners.

Stuart Andrew:

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is the legal responsibility of businesses, whether as employers or providers of services, to ensure that guide dog owners can access their premises and services where reasonable to do so. This “reasonable adjustments” duty is anticipatory in the provision of services, meaning that businesses should expect that a proportion of their customers will be, for example, visually impaired and put in place measures to accommodate this, before being asked to do so.

If Guide Dogs UK wishes for a meeting, my officials would be happy to accommodate this. However with respect to how the law operates, it is important to be clear that the onus is on businesses to know their responsibilities and a range of guidance and codes of practice is available on this. Where things go wrong, enforcement will fall to

the person who considers that they have experienced unlawful discrimination, or a person acting on their behalf.

Before considering any legal action, a disabled person who may have been personally discriminated against because of a disability may contact The Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS), the government helpline established to provide free bespoke advice and in-depth support to individuals with discrimination concerns. The EASS can be contacted via their website -

<http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>, by telephone on 0808 8000082 or text phone on 0808 8000084. The EASS has the ability to intervene on an individual's behalf with a service provider to help resolve an issue. The EASS can also advise people who wish to take their complaint further on their options.

Navendu Mishra:

[159060]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that guide dog owners are not refused access to (a) shops, (b) other businesses and (c) taxis.

Stuart Andrew:

No one should be refused access to businesses or services because they use a guide or other assistance dog.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), businesses and public bodies that provide goods and services to the public must not unlawfully discriminate against disabled people, including those with assistance dogs. The Act places a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to premises, buildings and services. This could include allowing the use of assistance dogs so that disabled customers have the same access to goods and services and are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled customers. Taxi and private hire drivers have a specific duty under the Act to carry guide dogs and assistance dogs at no extra cost to the passenger.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published guidance for all businesses, including service providers, on this subject. The guidance explains that assistance dogs should be treated as auxiliary aids and not as pets. The guidance is available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/assistance-dogs-a-guide-for-all-businesses.pdf> and makes clear that businesses and service providers should allow assistance dogs access to buildings where dogs would normally not be permitted whenever this is reasonable.

Anybody who thinks that they have been discriminated against in the services offered to them - including where access to an assistance dog has been refused - can take legal action to resolve the issue. Before doing so, they might first find it useful to contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) which provides free bespoke advice and in-depth support to individuals with discrimination concerns via their website - <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>, or by telephone on 0808 800 0082 or by text phone on 0808 800 0084.

■ Safe to Be Me Conference: Costs

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[147306\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 May 2022 to Question 4676, on Safe to Be Me Conference: Costs, what was the final cost incurred to his Department, after reconciliation of costs, of cancelling the Safe to Be Me conference in April 2022.

Stuart Andrew:

Costs incurred amount to just over £520,000, as detailed in the table below.

CATEGORY OF SPEND	COST (INCLUDING VAT)	DESCRIPTION
Venue	£186,618	The Government is liable to pay a cancellation charge as stated in the contract.
Pre-conference production	£321,480	Production costs incurred prior to cancellation.
Website Translation and Branding	£15,833	Services for translating text and for designing conference branding.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Emma Hardy:

[\[162267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications to the Access to Work Scheme have not been processed as of 9 March 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

At close of business on 9 March 2023, there are 7,235 applications in progress and 17,190 applications awaiting progression.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal departmental use only, and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[162181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints his Department has received in each of the last five years; and how many and what proportion of those complaints have been referred to the Independent Case Examiner.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[162182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints about his Department have been received in each month since 1 January 2020; and how many of those complaints have been referred to the Independent Case Examiner.

Mims Davies:

DWP publishes complaints received data on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk. The data is currently published up to December 2022 and is available [here](#).

The Independent Case Examiner (ICE) publishes complaints received and accepted data on a quarterly basis on Gov.uk. The data is currently published up to December 2022 and is available [here](#). The number of approaches **received** into the ICE office is much higher than the number **accepted** due to premature or inappropriate referrals which do not progress to be considered for investigation. Please note, the published ICE figures do not include any acceptances for complaints relating to providers delivering contracted DWP services or Northern Ireland Department for Communities.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Correspondence**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[158925]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of developing standardised Proof of Benefit and Uprating Letters to include (a) the type and nature of awards and (b) other information which the recipient may find useful.

Guy Opperman:

We have standardised Proof of Benefit letters for five benefits, ESA, IS, JSA, State Pension and Pension Credit.

The differences between benefits makes standardising Uprating letters impractical. We do add other useful information where appropriate, recently promoting Pension Credit through State Pension letters.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Publications**

Seema Malhotra:

[160289]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 152230 on Department for Work and Pensions: Publications, if he will make it his Department's policy to routinely send the Touchbase newsletter to all staff in his Department.

Seema Malhotra:

[160290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March to Question 152230 on Department for Work and Pensions: Publications, what recent assessment his Department made of the effectiveness of Touchbase at communicating Department activity to Job Centre Plus staff.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[160291\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 152230 on Department for Work and Pensions: Publications, what steps he is taking to advertise Touchbase to staff in his Department.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[160292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 152229 on Universal Credit, what steps his Department is taking to advertise Touchbase to Universal Credit claimants.

Mims Davies:

Touchbase is a weekly email newsletter from the Department for Work and Pensions which provides links to new and updated information on GOV.UK and other websites. It is the primary communication channel for DWP to a wide range of external stakeholders from diverse organisations across the UK who work with, support and advise our customers.

While Touchbase is not produced for Jobcentre Plus staff or Universal Credit claimants, DWP has a comprehensive internal communications programme which ensures that colleagues across the organisation are aware of the department's priorities and the individual initiatives to deliver them.

The topics covered in Touchbase will routinely be part of this internal communications programme.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services

Darren Jones:

[\[160360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has withdrawn the use of the (a) SignVideo Relay Service and (b) textphone number.

Tom Pursglove:

I can confirm that DWP continues to provide Video Relay Service (VRS) to customers who require remote inbound BSL interpretation. All VRS is provided by our current supplier, DA Languages, via SignSolution. We do not use Textphone within the Language Services contract. We no longer use the former supplier 'SignVideo', referenced in the question.

■ Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[160393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 154053 on Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, what steps he is taking to put in place safeguards to prevent vulnerable claimants' claims falling out of payment.

Marsha De Cordova:

[160394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 154053 on Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of safeguards to prevent vulnerable claimants' claims falling out of payment.

Tom Pursglove:

Some claimants may not be able to engage effectively with the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims process due to vulnerability – for example, they may not understand the consequences of not returning a claim or review form and not have a personal acting body (PAB) to help them. Claimants identified as requiring additional support (AS) during the gathering of initial claim information, or at a later date in the claimant journey, can have an AS marker added to their claim. Elements of the PIP claims process have been adapted to provide further support for this group, including not disallowing them for non-return of a form.

The PIP Assessment Guide is guidance for health professionals carrying out assessments and includes a section (1.12) on identifying claimants who require AS to engage with the PIP application process.

We regularly review the use of the AS marker to ensure it continues to protect those who find it difficult to engage with the PIP process.

■ **Employment Schemes: Long Term Unemployed People**

James Daly:

[159048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to help long-term unemployed people back into work; what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of such support; and if he will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions is responsible for getting people into work and making work pay.

We do this through our core Jobcentre offer which provides a range of options to those seeking employment, including face-to-face time with work coaches and interview assistance.

■ **Employment: Epilepsy**

Kirsten Oswald:

[158982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he has taken to support people with epilepsy in the workplace.

Tom Pursglove:

A range of Government initiatives are supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, including epilepsy, to start, stay, and succeed in work. These include:

- Increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work;
- The Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- Access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace;
- The Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace; and
- Support in partnership between the DWP and the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies, which combines psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions.

■ Employment: Hearing Impairment

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[162166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of people (a) with hearing loss and (b) who list their primary medical condition as difficulty in hearing were (i) in employment, (ii) economically inactive and (iii) unemployed in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[162167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of people (a) with hearing loss and (b) who list their primary medical condition as difficulty in hearing were recorded as being economically inactive for the reason of (i) being a student, (ii) looking after family or home, (iii) being temporarily sick, (iv) being long-term sick, (v) being a discouraged worker, (vi) being retired and (vii) other reasons in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[162168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of people (a) with hearing loss and (b) who list their primary medical condition as difficulty in hearing in employment were in employment as (i) an employee, (ii) self-employed, (iii) unpaid family workers and (iv) part of a Government supported training and employment programme in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Tom Pursglove:

The available data for disabled people is shown in the tables below.

Information on unpaid family workers for people with difficulty in hearing is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on people with hearing loss and difficulty in hearing on supported training and employment programmes is not held by the department.

Number and proportion of disabled people by labour market status and main health condition, 16 to 64, UK:

	ALL DISABLED PEOPLE				
Labour market status	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total	7,470,000	7,820,000	8,270,000	8,280,000	9,010,000
In employment	50.8%	51.4%	53.5%	52.3%	54.3%
<i>Employee</i>	42.3%	43.2%	45.2%	44.8%	46.7%
<i>Self-employed</i>	8.0%	7.8%	8.0%	7.1%	7.4%
Unemployed	4.8%	4.7%	4.1%	4.6%	4.2%
Economically inactive	44.4%	43.9%	42.4%	43.1%	41.5%
<i>Student</i>	3.4%	3.7%	3.7%	4.2%	4.0%
<i>Looking after family / home</i>	6.7%	6.8%	6.1%	5.7%	5.8%
<i>Temporary sick</i>	1.9%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%
<i>Long-term sick</i>	25.6%	25.1%	24.6%	24.8%	23.9%
<i>Retired</i>	4.1%	3.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.2%
<i>Other reasons</i>	2.7%	3.0%	3.0%	3.5%	2.8%

	DIFFICULTY IN HEARING				
Labour market status	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total	70,000	70,000	80,000	60,000	80,000
In employment	64.9%	61.1%	63.8%	66.5%	67.7%
<i>Employee</i>	55.6%	52.0%	56.1%	60.3%	62.5%

DIFFICULTY IN HEARING

<i>Self-employed</i>	9.2%	9.2%	7.0%	5.2%	5.0%
Unemployed	4.3%	6.7%	6.0%	5.8%	3.5%
Economically inactive	30.8%	32.1%	30.2%	27.7%	28.7%
<i>Student</i>	1.5%	4.4%	6.2%	7.4%	9.6%
<i>Looking after family / home</i>	5.7%	7.0%	4.1%	4.4%	7.1%
<i>Temporary sick</i>	0.3%	1.8%	1.3%	..	0.3%
<i>Long-term sick</i>	16.0%	9.2%	9.4%	6.8%	2.3%
<i>Retired</i>	4.0%	6.2%	5.1%	5.9%	3.1%
<i>Other reasons</i>	3.4%	3.5%	4.0%	3.2%	6.4%

Source : Annual Population Survey (APS).

Underlying data (except employee and self-employed breakdowns for disabled people with difficulty in hearing) is published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2022>.

Notes :

1. Estimates in this table are subject to sampling variation and their precision limited by sample sizes.
2. Estimates for disabled people with difficulty in hearing are based on small sample sizes and should be used with caution.
3. Numbers are shown to the nearest 10,000. Percentages are calculated using unrounded figures and shown to one decimal place.
4. Disabled people are likely to report more than one long-term health condition (57% in 2021/22). Where more than one condition is reported the main health condition given is the one that has the biggest impact on a person's day-to-day activities.
5. The way a person self-reports a long-term health condition and its impact can change over time. Nearly one in three people classed as being disabled one year were no longer classed as being disabled the next (2014 to 2021).
6. Reason for economic inactivity (such as student or looking after family / home) is the main reason given.
7. Other reasons include discouraged workers.

8. "." = no data.

■ Employment: Lone Parents

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[158975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support single parents to re-enter the workplace.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to ensuring that Universal Credit helps parents prepare for, move into, stay and progress in work.

Single parents, like all claimants, are set requirements that take into account their circumstances and capability, including caring responsibilities, health conditions and disabilities. These requirements will be tailored by the Work Coach and will be achievable and realistic.

Claimants whose youngest child is aged two to four can have their support adjusted so they can attend training (such as refresher courses) for up to a year, where it will improve their chance of returning to a previous occupation or increasing their earnings. Work coaches can consider adjusting work search and work availability requirements for up to one year, where the work coach believes the course or training will help the parent find work before the youngest child reaches 5.

■ Home Responsibilities Protection

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[162297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22, what steps he has taken to investigate and correct issues with Home Responsibilities Protection not being recorded on National Insurance Records; how many people are impacted by these issues; and when he next plans to update the House on this matter.

Laura Trott:

Work continues across DWP and HMRC on the analysis of the historic Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) issue. This work has been to understand more about the scale, the root cause, and options to correct historical errors relating to HRP for customers who claimed Child Benefit. The analysis is complex, involving using National Insurance records to identify customers who may have been eligible for Child Benefit and may be impacted.

The complexity means that the investigation work is continuing. We expect that the impact on State Pension payments will be quantified and the next steps for correction activity will be set out during the first half of 2023.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Vicky Foxcroft:

[159087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in how many and what proportion of cases in which there was mandatory reconsideration of a Personal Independence Payment assessment was the resulting points award the same as the points award in the initial decision.

Tom Pursglove:

For Personal Independence Payment (PIP) initial decisions made in the period 1st July 2016 to 30th June 2022 there were 595,500 Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) outcomes where the total points score was the same as that at the initial decision. This equates to 73% of the decided MRs relating to those initial decisions. For some cases, points scores are missing from the data and so these have not been included.

Please note:

- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and percentages to the nearest percent.
- We have provided data for England and Wales (excluding Scotland) in line with the latest published figures on PIP.
- This data covers initial decisions following a PIP assessment only (New Claims or DLA Reassessments) between 1st July 2016 and 30th June 2022, the latest period for which data is available. It does not include applications which end before an assessment (for example, due to failure to return required paperwork or attend an assessment) or decisions made at an Award Review or Change of Circumstance.
- Figures do not include cases which are classified as Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) at either initial decision or MR stage.
- These figures include information on MR related to those initial decisions which were decided by 30th September 2022, the latest date for which published data is available. Note that more MRs could be made and completed after September 2022, so numbers may change. Only completed MRs where a decision was made are included in these figures. Withdrawn/Cancelled MR have been excluded.
- Comparison was based on total points score at each stage – that is, the sum of Daily Living and Mobility score elements. This means that scores against individual descriptors could have changed, but with zero net effect.

■ Social Security Benefits

Kate Osamor:

[159052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason it is his policy that people who work but earn less than £658 are subject to the benefit cap.

Guy Opperman:

Under Universal Credit the cap is disapplied if a household has earnings that are equal to or above a prescribed earnings threshold, which is currently £658 /16 hours per week at National living wage.

Getting our claimants back into work remains our primary concern and returning to employment will significantly increase the likelihood of a household not being affected by the cap.

Kate Osamor: [\[159054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of exempting people who are not required to actively seek work from the benefit cap.

Kate Osamor: [\[159057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help support people who are not required to actively seek work but are subject to the benefit cap.

Kate Osamor: [\[159058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the benefit cap acting as a work incentive for claimants who are subject to the benefit cap and not expected to work.

Guy Opperman:

A range of employment support and advice is available from Work Coaches in Jobcentres to help people earn enough to be exempt from the cap and start to become less reliant on benefits.

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals**Kate Osamor:** [\[159021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time was for his Department to reinstate payments for (a) Employment and Support Allowance, (b) Universal Credit and (c) Personal Independence Payment following a tribunal allowing an appeal in each month between January 2020 and March 2023.

Kate Osamor: [\[159023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has a target timescale for reinstating claims for (a) Universal Credit, (b) Personal Independence Payment and (c) Employment and Support Allowance after an appeal has been allowed.

Kate Osamor: [\[159024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish guidance on the steps a claimant should take when his Department fails to reinstate a claim following a successful appeal.

Tom Pursglove:

Personal Independence Payment has a target of 28 days for implementing a tribunal's decision and is currently averaging around 10 days.

Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit do not have an overarching target. Decisions are implemented as quickly as possible, with some exceptions.

For all three benefits, information on the average time to reinstate payments for the period requested is not collated centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

If a decision is not implemented timeously, there is guidance published by HMCTS and available on Gov.UK, entitled '*How to appeal against a decision made by the Department for Work and Pensions*'.

The main reason that a tribunal's decision might not be implemented timeously, is if the Secretary of State considers that the decision may contain an error of law and suspends payment of the tribunal's award whilst that is considered. In such a case the claimant must be notified that this is being done. If the claimant is not notified of a reason for the decision not being implemented, then they can contact the department: this can be done by using the telephone numbers on Gov.UK, on the decision letter they received, or by attending a Jobcentre; if it is a UC appeal they can use their journal.

■ Social Security Benefits: Carers**Kate Osamor:**[\[159053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason it is his policy that the benefit cap is applied to people who are the primary carer of a child under the age of three and are not expected to search for work.

Kate Osamor:[\[159056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the benefit cap on primary carers of children under the age of three.

Guy Opperman:

The Benefit Cap provides a strong work incentive and fairness for hard-working taxpaying households, whilst providing a reasonable safety net of support for the most vulnerable.

The Government firmly believes that where possible it is in the best interests of children to be in working households and the benefit cap provides a clear incentive to move into work.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has completed his statutory annual up-rating review and State Pension and benefit rates will increase in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the year to September 2022. This means the rate of Universal Credit standard allowance will increase by 10.1% from 10 April 2023.

■ Social Security Benefits: Underpayments

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[162179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are owed money from his Department as a result of underpayment or other errors.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[162180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average amount is that individuals are owed by Department as a result of (a) underpayment or (b) other error as at 9 March 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

The DWP has taken significant steps to ensure the accuracy of benefit payments and, where underpayments are discovered, takes prompt action to rectify matters to ensure claimants are receiving their correct entitlement.

Alongside the department's well-established quality checking regime, our Targeted Case Review initiative will review 2 million UC cases over the next 5 years, checking entitlement and helping ensure people are receiving the right amount of benefit.

Estimates of underpayments are set out in the department's national statistics on 'Fraud and Error in the Benefit System'. This is expressed in terms of both value and as a percentage of cases with error. In 2021/22, we estimate that £2.6bn was underpaid; the percentage of cases with an underpayment error is shown by benefit rather than as an overall figure.

Note that the percentages of cases with error reflects the average cases incorrect at one time, rather than the total number of errors over the whole year. We express this as a percentage rather than as a whole number.

[Fraud and error in the benefit system: financial year 2021 to 2022 estimates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](#)

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[162300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether overseas British pensioners who have received multiple Proof of Life letters should ignore subsequent letters received within a 24 month period if they have provided the requested evidence.

Laura Trott:

DWP issues Life Certificates to overseas State Pension customers on a rolling 24-month cycle. Therefore, if a customer receives multiple Life Certificates in this period, when they have already completed and returned a Life Certificate, we recommend that they contact the International Pension Centre helpline on 0044 191 2187777 to ensure that we have received the completed Life Certificate for the period concerned. This will ensure that their State Pension remains in payment and is not subject to a potential temporary suspension.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Widowed People

Rosie Duffield:

[\[159046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of financial support for widows and widowers who do not receive their late spouse's state pension following the introduction of the bereavement support payment.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made, however, the Department has a wide range of financial support available to those affected by bereavement.

Funeral Expense Payments contribute to the cost of a funeral arranged by someone in receipt of income-related benefits, and Budgeting Loans and Budgeting Advances are interest-free loans available to claimants of income-related benefits. Bereavement Support Payment helps working age people through the difficult period following bereavement when their spouse, civil partner (or cohabiting partner if there are children) dies. Further support for day to day living expenses is available via Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[161299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 156965 on Universal Credit, which of the 90 jobcentres listed are testing (a) enhanced daily support only, (b) the reward scheme only and (c) both enhanced daily support and the reward scheme.

Guy Opperman:

The first phase of the pilot roll-out was completed on 27th February with 42 jobcentres joining the initial four proof of concept sites. As the roll-out progress a further 44 jobcentres are due to go live by the 27th March bringing the total to 90 jobcentres participating in the pilot, either testing the enhanced daily support only; or the enhanced daily support and the rewards scheme; or testing the rewards scheme only. Details of the which pilot measure each of the participating jobcentres are testing will be published in due course.

■ Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[159106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February to Question 148746 on Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment, whether he plans to record that information in future.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[159107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February to Question 148747 on Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment, whether he plans to record this information in future.

Tom Pursglove:

There are no plans to include this information in the UC Service in a way that would enable management information to be produced on it automatically. This is because, once the threshold for entitlement is reached in the Work Capability Assessment, which has the purpose of determining entitlement to LCW or LCWRA, the actual number of points, and the extent to which the entitlement threshold is exceeded, is not a relevant piece of data to collect or retain.

■ **Work Capability Assessment****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[162178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Work Capability Assessments were conducted (a) over the phone, (b) face-to-face, (c) via paper-based assessments and (d) via video call over the last 12 months.

Tom Pursglove:

The number of Work Capability Assessments (WCA) that have been carried out by (a) telephone, (b) face-to-face, (c) paper-based and (d) video over the last 12 months, can be found in the table below.

WCA CHANNEL	NUMBER OF WCAS BETWEEN FEB 22 AND JAN 23
(a) Telephone Assessment	414,000
(b) Face-to-face Assessment	90,000
(c) Paper-based Assessment	79,000
(d) Video Assessment	45,000
Total	628,000

Please note

- All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.
- All the above data is derived from contractual management information produced by the assessment providers.
- The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards.

■ **Workplace Pensions****Julian Knight:**[\[158963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to enable auto-enrolment to pensions from 18 years of age.

Laura Trott:

The Government remains committed to enabling Automatic Enrolment (AE) into workplace pensions from age 18, consistent with our 2017 AE Review proposals. That is why we are supporting Jonathan Gullis's Private Members' Bill, which had its second reading on Friday 3 March; this presents an immediate route for the necessary legislative powers in the current Parliamentary session. The Bill includes a statutory requirement to consult and report on the outcomes to inform the implementation approach and timing, before using these powers.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Kate Osamor:

[\[147328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to publish a revised Air Quality Strategy.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 February 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Rebecca Pow:

~~The Department has not made an assessment of the impact of unregulated canine fertility clinics on animal welfare.~~

The department plans to publish a revised National Air Quality Strategy later this year.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Brain: Tumours

Lisa Nandy:

[\[160266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of developing a strategic plan for the (a) funding and (b) other resourcing of (i) discovery, (ii) translational and (iii) clinical research into brain tumours.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 13 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Helen Whately:

~~The Department has published its Health Infrastructure Plan in September 2019 that sets out the Government's strategy and priorities for investing in the National Health Service estate, including in cancer centres. We are at present working on an update to this strategy through to 2030.~~

The Department-funded National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) invests in research, clinical expertise, specialist facilities, workforce and support services across a range of clinical areas, including brain tumour research. NIHR has recently announced the outcome of the Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) competition in which six BRCs have been funded to support brain tumour research. The NIHR BRCs work in partnership with other research centres such as the CRUK Brain Tumour Centre of Excellence to collect samples for research purposes as well as local and national sample storage facilities to support research into brain tumours.

Currently, we do not have a national capital programme strictly dedicated to cancer centres. However, there are several programmes, including the Targeted Investment Fund, the New Hospital Programme and the Hospital Upgrades Programme, that are funding upgrades to existing cancer centres. These schemes are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

HOME OFFICE

■ Passports: Gender Recognition

Andrew Lewer:

[156262]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the policy is of HM Passport Office on allowing people without a gender recognition certificate to change the sex registered on their passport.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications awaiting a decision by nationality can be found in table Asy_D03 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. Please note the data show a snapshot as at the last day of each quarter, rather than the number of asylum applications awaiting a decision over the entire quarter. The latest data relates to as at 31 December 2022. Data as at 31 March 2023 will be published on 25 May 2023. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

This data is not available broken down by outcomes received by family members.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

HM Passport Office's gender recognition policy includes guidance for customers regarding the evidence required when someone is changing their passport sex marker without a gender recognition certificate. The policy can be found at Gender recognition policy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ **Baseline Profit Rate for Single Source Defence Contracts 2023-24****Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**[\[HCWS632\]](#)

I am today announcing that I have set the baseline profit rate for single source defence contracts at 8.29%, in line with the rate recommended by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). This a decrease of 0.02 percentage points from 2022/23. I have accepted the methodology used by the SSRO to calculate these figures. The 'underlying rate' has risen 0.25 percentage points from 8.19% to 8.44%.

Last year, I removed financial year 2020/21 from the calculation of the profit rate to reduce the long term effect of COVID on our suppliers' profit. The SSRO have taken the same approach this year. A full explanation of their methodology is published on their website.

I am also announcing the Capital Servicing Rates and a SSRO funding adjustment as recommended by the SSRO, which can be found at Table 1 below. These rates have been published in the London Gazette, as required by the Defence Reform Act 2014.

All of these new rates will come into effect from 1 April 2023.

Table 1: Recommended Rates agreed by the Secretary of State for Defence

ELEMENT	2022 RATES	2023 RATES
Baseline Profit Rate (BPR) (%) on contract cost)	8.31%	8.29%
Baseline Profit Rate to apply to contracts between the Secretary of State and a company wholly owned by the UK Government and where both parties agree (% on contract cost)	0.046%	0.038%
Fixed Capital Servicing Rate (% on Fixed Capital employed)	3.27%	2.9%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on positive Working Capital employed)	1.33%	1.67%
Working Capital Servicing Rate (% on negative Working	0.65%	0.51%

ELEMENT	2022 RATES	2023 RATES
Capital employed)		
SSRO Funding Adjustment	0.046%	0.038%

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Local Authority Public Health Update

Minister for Primary Care and Public Health (Neil O'Brien):

[\[HCWS633\]](#)

Today I am publishing the Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities in England for 2023-24, along with indicative allocations for 2024-25.

Funding for local government's health responsibilities is an essential element of our commitment to invest in preventing ill health, promoting healthier lives and addressing health disparities and an important complement to our plans to invest strongly in both health and social care.

The 2021 Spending Review confirmed that the level of funding for the Public Health Grant to local authorities would increase over the Spending Review period, and all local authorities received a 2.8% increase in 2022-23 taking the Public Health Grant to £3.417 billion.

In 2023-24, through the Public Health Grant and the pilot of 100% retained business rate funding for local authorities in Greater Manchester, we are increasing funding to £3.529 billion, providing each local authority with a 3.3% cash terms increase. To help local authorities plan ahead, we are also publishing today indicative allocations for 2024-25, on the basis of a further 1.3% cash uplift which would take 2024-25 funding to £3.575 billion. This will provide every local authority with real-terms funding protection in each of the next two years.

These allocations include baselining of local government funding of £1.4 million a year for their enforcement duties under the Botulinum Toxin and Fillers (Children) Act 2021.

The allocations I am announcing today are part of a wider package of investment in public health services. This includes additional targeted investment up to 2025 of £516 million going to local authorities to improve drug and alcohol addiction treatment and £170 million to improve the Start for Life services available to families with majority allocated to 75 local authority areas, as part of the joint DfE and DHSC £300 million Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.

This overall funding package will deliver a real-terms increase of more than 5% in DHSC investment in local authority public health functions over the next two years, enabling local authorities to invest in prevention of ill health and in essential frontline services.

The 2023-24 the Public Health Grant will continue to be subject to conditions, including a ring-fence requiring local authorities to use the grant exclusively for public health activity.

Full details of the Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities for 2023-24 and indicative allocations for 2024-25 can be found on gov.uk and are attached. This information has been communicated to local authorities in a Local Authority Circular.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Update on Building Safety

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS634\]](#)

On 30 January 2023 the government published the developer remediation contract and gave an initial cohort of developers six weeks to sign it. The deadline expired yesterday and I wish to share the responses.

I can today confirm that 39 developers have signed the contract. A list of those developers has been published on GOV.UK. These developers represent a substantial proportion of our housing market. By signing the contract, they have irreversibly committed to fixing at least 1,100 buildings at a cost to themselves of more than £2 billion.

The contract gives effect to the self-remediation pledge that the largest house-builders signed last year. It requires signatories to fix all life-critical fire-safety defects in all buildings in England over 11 metres that they had a role in developing or refurbishing. It also requires them to reimburse the taxpayer where government funds have already paid for remediation, with that money being used to make other buildings safe faster.

I wish to place on the record my appreciation for the lengths that developers have gone to to agree this contract, and the significant commitments that it entails. It is a testament to the sense of responsibility that I know is felt throughout the industry. It also reflects the determination that we all share to protect leaseholders from unjust costs. In that spirit, we will of course monitor the performance of obligations under the contract. These will begin with their informing leaseholders that they have accepted responsibility for buildings, and set out timescales for work to commence.

A total of 11 eligible developers that were invited to sign the contract have not yet done so. Some have asked reasonable questions about the arrangements for payments. Others have simply not got themselves organised, have failed to engage in time, or have not arranged their internal governance in good time. In accordance with provisions in the Building Safety Act, the government will publish further information next week on how developers will be prohibited from commencing or completing developments in England, unless they sign and adhere to the contract. Regulations will, with Parliament's consent, establish the Responsible Actors Scheme and set out the criteria for membership. Developers who do not sign the contract will be ineligible to join the Scheme, and subject to the prohibitions. A list of developers that are yet to sign the contract has been published on GOV.UK today.

The signing of this contract by so many developers is an acceptance of their share in our collective responsibility for building safety and brings us closer to resolving the issue for leaseholders and tenants.

Let me take this opportunity, once again, to apologise to those leaseholders, and others, who have waited so long for this work to be done. While there is still much to do, I hope that today does show that your campaigning has not been in vain.

The government will continue to remove dangerous cladding from buildings whose developers have not signed the contract or cannot be traced, using its building safety funds.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Cabinet Committees

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS627\]](#)

Today I am publishing an updated Cabinet Committee list. I have placed a copy of the new list in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS630\]](#)

On 7 February, I announced the creation of four new government departments: the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology; the Department for Business and Trade; and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Following the implementation of those changes, I am announcing the following changes to the sponsorship of public bodies and regulators by these new departments.

The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority will be sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero under the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. This will support the Secretary of State in his role to position the UK as a leader in sustainable nuclear energy.

The Information Commissioner's Office will be sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology under the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology. This will enable the Secretary of State to deliver an innovative and effective approach to the use of personal data, which forms part of the UK's approach to data protection including on Artificial Intelligence policy and regulation.

The Copyright Tribunal will now be appointed by the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, supported by the tribunal's close links with the Intellectual Property Office, which also sit in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The Office of Communications (Ofcom) and the Phone-Paid Services Authority, which will shortly be merged into Ofcom, will now sit with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology under the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology. This will ensure policy responsibility for the majority of Ofcom's regulatory remit sits in

one department, while recognising that Ofcom will retain a close relationship with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on broadcasting policy and the Department for Business and Trade on matters relating to the regulation of the Post Office.

TRANSPORT

■ Draft revised National Networks National Policy Statement

Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):

[\[HCWS629\]](#)

Today I am laying before Parliament the draft revised National Networks National Policy Statement.

The National Networks National Policy Statement was designated in 2015. It sets out the need for development of road, rail and strategic rail freight interchange projects on the national networks, and the policy against which decisions on major road and rail projects will be made. The National Networks National Policy Statement provides guidance to applicants in preparing, and the Secretary of State in determining, applications for development consent orders for national network infrastructure projects.

The Government announced a review of the current National Networks National Policy Statement in a written ministerial statement in July 2021 in light of net zero commitments, including the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. I have today launched a public consultation on a draft of a revised National Networks National Policy Statement, as well as supporting habitats and sustainability reports, and associated appendices. These are subject to a 12-week public consultation and parliamentary scrutiny in parallel and are all available on gov.uk.

I will place copies of the public consultation document, the Appraisal of Sustainability and its appendices, and the Habitats Regulation Assessment in the Libraries of the House. The public consultation will close on 6 June 2023. The relevant period for parliamentary scrutiny will be from 14 March 2023 to 20 October 2023.

The review of the National Networks National Policy Statement is being progressed as part of the Government's Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Action Plan, which will ensure that the planning process for the development of projects is as clear and efficient as possible. I have asked my officials to complete the review of the National Networks National Policy Statement as quickly as possible during 2023.

■ Review of the National Policy Statement for Ports

Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Mark Harper):

[\[HCWS628\]](#)

The Government is committed to a strong planning regime for nationally significant infrastructure which properly takes into account impacts on the natural environment, air quality and valued landscapes, and the views of local communities affected by development.

The National Policy Statement for Ports was published in 2012. While the Statement continues to provide an appropriate framework for planning decisions in relation to ports

infrastructure development and associated development, such as road and rail links, it is important to ensure the Statement continues to support decision making effectively.

In the Freeports Bidding Prospectus, the Government set out its intention to review the National Policy Statement for Ports in 2021. I am today announcing a review of the National Policy Statement for Ports under the provisions of the Planning Act 2008. This review will include a thorough examination of the modelling and forecasts that support the statement of need for development, and the environmental, safety, resilience, and local community considerations that planning decisions must take into account. Reviewing the National Policy Statement for Ports will ensure that it remains fit for purpose in supporting the Government's commitments for appropriate development of infrastructure for ports and associated road and rail links.

For the avoidance of doubt, the existing National Policy Statement for Ports will remain in full effect during the period of the review. Any current or upcoming applications for development consent will be assessed under the current National Policy Statement for Ports.

WALES

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Secretary of State for Wales (David T C Davies):

[\[HCWS631\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Wales Office's intention to seek a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance to meet an urgent cash requirement pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate 2022-23.

The Welsh Government is operating within its budgets, so this does not represent additional spending. However, an increase in net cash requirement will be sought in the Supplementary Estimate so accessing the Contingencies Fund will allow the Welsh Government to fund this existing spending in the meantime.

Parliamentary approval for additional non-budget expenditure of £150,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Wales Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £150,000,000 will be met by a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund.

The advance will be repaid immediately following Royal Assent of the Supply and Appropriation (Anticipation and Adjustments) Bill in March.