



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 15 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

■ **Borders: Security**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[160232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the brochure on border security capabilities published by UK Defence and Security Exports on 24 November 2021, how many expressions of interest were received from overseas governments in response to that brochure up to the end of 2022; how many contracts have been agreed as a result of those expressions of interest; and what is the total estimated value of those contracts.

Nigel Huddleston:

The information requested in this parliamentary question is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Department for International Trade: Expenditure**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when she intends to publish the December 2022 spending data over £25,000 for the Department for International Trade.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade intends to publish the Department for International Trade spending data for transactions over £25,000 in the coming weeks.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[160119\]](#)

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 £37,981 on corporate event management and marketing with Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council on 13 September 2022, transaction reference 462424.

Nigel Huddleston:

Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC, the Commonwealth accredited business organisation) were contracted by the former Department for International Trade to plan and co-design and manage the delivery of various business aspects of the Commonwealth Games Business and Tourism Programme, including the Business Forum on 28th July 2022 to attract businesses, investment and trade opportunities.

This was the payment for event management including a series of plenary sessions, recruitment of a targeted business audience and co-ordinating Heads of Government and Commonwealth Business Leaders, producing the programme and agenda and carrying out customer feedback at the Business Forum.

■ P&O Ferries: Company Accounts

Louise Haigh: [\[160320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will take action against P&O Ferries Ltd for failing to submit company accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government plans to take action against P&O FERRIES HOLDINGS LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRIES DIVISION HOLDINGS LIMITED for failing to submit accounts and Confirmation Statements on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRIES PRIDE OF HULL LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRIES SHIP MANAGEMENT LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRIES (SHORT SEA) LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRIES THAMES LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O EUROPEAN FERRIES (IRISH SEA) LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O EUROPEAN FERRIES (PORTSMOUTH) LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O NORTH SEA FERRIES LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O SHORT SEA FERRIES LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Louise Haigh: [\[160331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Government will take action against P&O FERRYMASTERS LIMITED for failing to submit accounts on time.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I am not able to comment on individual cases.

All limited companies must file their accounts at Companies House each year. Failure to do so is an offence and can result in a criminal prosecution of the company's directors. The law imposes an automatic civil penalty on a company if the accounts are filed late, although a company may apply to extend this period in certain circumstances. The penalty amount depends on how late the accounts are when delivered. Penalties are doubled if the accounts are filed late in consecutive years.

The Registrar will proceed with action to remove a company from the register where the accounts remain overdue, and to bring prosecution proceedings where it is in the public interest to do so.

■ Products: Safety

Seema Malhotra: [\[151303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment she has made of potential effect of the EU's proposed General Product Safety Regulation on creating a divergence in product safety between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Seema Malhotra: [\[151304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the Office for Product Safety and Standards will be responsible for enforcing the EU's General Product Safety Regulation in Northern Ireland.

Kevin Hollinrake:

We have not made an assessment of potential divergence between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK resulting from the EU's proposed General Product Safety Regulation, though we continue to watch developments and listen to the issues raised. Any assessment will need to consider the final Regulation once agreed, as well as the outcome of Product Safety Review consultation as this will shape the Government's approach for the rest of the UK.

Subject to the final EU Regulation we expect that, as is the case now, District Councils and other market surveillance authorities operating in Northern Ireland, including the Office for Product Safety and Standards, will enforce the product safety rules applicable in Northern Ireland.

■ **Small Businesses: Loans**

Bill Esterson: [\[162500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Federation of Small Business report entitled Time Is Money: The Case for Late Payment Reform, published on 10 March 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

We are currently undertaking a Payment and Cash Flow review. The Review will report later in the year and will set out the actions we will take to ensure we have the right approach to support business on payment issues. We are engaging with a range of stakeholders, including the Federation of Small Businesses, as part of this work.

■ **Trade Agreements: India**

Ian Paisley: [\[160274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress her Department has made on negotiating a free trade agreement with India; whether she has had discussions with her Indian counterpart on the potential merits of including tariff reductions for Irish whiskey exporters in that agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

A free trade agreement with India offers the opportunity to deepen our already strong trade relationship, worth £34 billion in the year to end Q3 2022.

We seek a forward-looking FTA which includes a solid market access offer that can boost firms like Irish whiskey exporters, as well as easing red tape for services and ensuring greater legal certainty for investment.

On 10 February 2023, the seventh round of UK-India FTA concluded. We do not discuss details of live negotiations, and will only sign a deal that is fair, reciprocal, and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Covid-19 Inquiry: Equality**

Anneliese Dodds: [\[161404\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Department is taking to ensure that the Covid-19 inquiry hears views from people with protected characteristics including (a) ethnicity, (b) disability and (c) sex.

Alex Burghart:

The Covid-19 inquiry's terms of reference require it to consider any disparities evident in the impact of the pandemic on different protected characteristics including (a) ethnicity, (b) disability and (c) sex, and to listen to the experiences of those most affected by the pandemic. The inquiry's process and procedure for fulfilling its terms of reference are a matter for its independent chair.

■ **Dominic Raab****Angela Rayner:**[\[162186\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 92230 on Dominic Raab, whether his Department has received any further formal complaints regarding the conduct of the Deputy Prime Minister since 29 November.

Alex Burghart:

I refer the honourable member to my earlier answer of 19 December. [UIN 110723]

■ **Leader of the House of Commons: Recruitment****Christine Jardine:**[\[150591\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on recruitment consultants in each of the last three years.

Alex Burghart:

I refer the Hon. Member to [PQ 136762](#) – Cabinet Office is unable to provide the full spend for 2022-23 until after the end of the current Financial Year.

■ **Senior Civil Servants: Training****Dean Russell:**[\[160440\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on his Department's target to train senior civil servants as Wellbeing Confident Leaders.

Jeremy Quin:

The Wellbeing Confident Leaders training was a cross-government initiative led by Civil Service HR (CSHR).

When the programme concluded on 31 March 2019, 61% of Cabinet Office Senior Civil Servants had received the Wellbeing Confident Leaders Training.

This programme was removed due to the development of the new Civil Service Teaming, which is open to all grades, and continues to be available.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:[\[162467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many fulltime staff worked on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme in each month since April 2021.

James Heapey:

A breakdown of all fulltime staff working on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy since April 2021 is included below.

APR-21	10
May-21	24
Jun-21	28
Jul-21	30
Aug-21	51
Sep-21	69
Oct-21	112
Nov-21	125
Dec-21	111
Jan-22	103
Feb-22	104
Mar-22	100
Apr-22	94
May-22	90
Jun-22	91
Jul-22	84
Aug-22	96
Sep-22	100
Oct-22	89
Nov-22	108
Dec-22	129

APR-21	10
Jan-23	122
Feb-23	153

These figures include both civilian and military staff assigned to work on the ARAP scheme, in the UK and overseas.

John Healey: [\[162468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy cases were awaiting processing on 10 March 2023.

James Heappey:

As of 10 March 2023, 66,837 cases were awaiting processing. We are now processing and issuing decisions on more applications per month than we are receiving, and in February 2023 we issued more eligibility decisions than in any other month previously.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence is aiming to have processed all outstanding applications by August 2023.

■ **Agnes Wanjiru**

John Healey: [\[162466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made in assisting Kenyan authorities with the investigation into the murder of Agnes Wanjiru.

James Heappey:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the former Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty) to Question 92810 on 5 January 2022 which remains extant.

Attachments:

1. Agnes Wanjiru [UIN 92810.docx]

■ **Armed Forces: Housing**

John Healey: [\[161236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 11 of his Department's report entitled A better defence estate, published in November 2016, what was the housing unit potential of land released during the 2016–17 Parliamentary session.

Alex Chalk:

The Housing Unit Potential for surplus Ministry of Defence land released during financial years 2016-17 was 4,379.

■ Army: Employment

John Healey: [\[162113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it remains his policy to reduce the size of the full time British Army to 73,000 soldiers.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence is reviewing whether it is now right to reduce the Regular Army to 73,000, as planned under Future Soldier. That process is ongoing.

Any specific policy changes or updates required related to defence capability and force design will be determined once the update to the Defence Command Paper has concluded.

■ Brompton Barracks

John Healey: [\[162121\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[162123\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[162125\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[162127\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[162129\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[162131\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

Brompton Barracks is 69.4 hectares in size.

Allenby Barracks is 1062.7 hectares in size.

Battlesbury Barracks is 29.7 hectares in size.

Horne Barracks is 14.5 hectares in size.

Roberts Barracks is 22.9 hectares in size.

Aliwal Barracks is 27.6 hectares in size.

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

■ France: Joint Exercises

John Healey: [\[158794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK-French joint military exercises took place each year since 2010.

John Healey: [\[158795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) UK and (b) French personnel took part in UK-French military exercises each year since 2010.

James Heappey:

The information requested on the UK-French joint military exercises can be found in the table below:

YEAR	EXERCISES	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF UK PERSONNEL TAKING PART IN EXERCISE ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF FR PERSONNEL TAKING PART IN EXERCISE ACTIVITY
2010	7	29,000	800
2011	9	2,240	1,780
2012	9	2,640	2,900
2013	9	975	1,700
2014	17	4,410	2,750
2015	16	3,000	2,140
2016	16	5,058	1,280
2017	16	2,050	2,570
2018	15	2,920	3,401
2019	15	2,655	2,925
2020	8	451	4,408
2021	19	10,957	4,998
2022	14	3,741	1,280

Notes to table:

1. Numbers of deployed Service personnel for both nations are approximations.
1. The numbers reflect France-UK bilateral exercises only; there will have been additional CJEF and multilateral activity that is not accounted for in these numbers.

■ Germany: Joint Exercises

John Healey: [\[158796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK-German joint military exercises took place each year since 2010.

John Healey: [\[158797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) UK and (b) German personnel took part in UK-French military exercises each year since 2010.

James Heappey:

The information requested on the UK-German joint military exercises can be found in the table below:

YEAR	EXERCISES	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF UK PERSONNEL TAKING PART IN EXERCISE ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GER PERSONNEL TAKING PART IN EXERCISE ACTIVITY
2010	4	225	1,150
2011	0	0	0
2012	4	20	800
2013	5	170	800
2014	4	370	800
2015	9	1,650	800
2016	3	50	800
2017	5	370	800
2018	7	600	800
2019	4	350	750
2020	0	0	0
2021	2	182	950
2022	8	232	400

Notes to table:

1. Numbers of deployed Service personnel for both nations are approximations.
1. The numbers reflect UK-GER exercises only; there will have been additional multilateral activity, including UK and Germany, that is not accounted for in these numbers.

■ Gibraltar: Territorial Waters

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[158817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has received recent reports on territorial infringements in Gibraltar waters; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

The Department receives regular updates on military activities in and around Gibraltar, including activity relating to incursions into British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW). Incursions into BGTW are a violation of Gibraltar's sovereignty, not a threat to it, and the Ministry of Defence closely monitors and responds to all such incidents in an appropriate manner.

■ Japan: Foreign Relations

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[159086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to strengthen defence relationships with Japan.

James Heapey:

The UK-Japan relationship is the closest it has been for decades. The Integrated review was warmly welcomed in Japan; our Indo-Pacific tilt provided reassurance that we would continue to play an active role on the international stage post-Brexit. Carrier Strike Group 21 and the deployment of HMS TAMAR and SPEY have reinforced this view.

The major recent announcements on the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) and Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 reinforce the UK's position as Japan's closest European security partner. GCAP will see us harnessing the technological and industrial strengths of all three countries for this once in a generation opportunity, which will sustain and future proof our cutting-edge Combat Air Sectors.

Once ratified by both countries in the coming months, the RAA will set out terms and conditions for UK and Japanese personnel undertaking activity in one another's countries. We will use the RAA to plan and deliver longer term, larger scale and more complex joint defence activity with Japan.

■ Military Bases: Sales**John Healey:** [\[161220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much income was generated by estate disposals between November 2016 and March 2023.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 March 2023, to question 153692.

Attachments:

1. Military Bases: Sales [UIN 153692.docx]

■ Military Bases: Training**John Healey:** [\[162119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide a breakdown of the usage of Defence Estate training areas by each area, for each year from 2010 to 2023.

Alex Chalk:

The data requested is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ RAF Wittering**Luke Pollard:** [\[164026\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[164029\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[164031\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

RAF Shawbury is 301.743 hectares in size.

RAF Digby is 181.858 hectares in size.

RAF Wittering is 479.064 hectares in size.

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

■ Regent's Park Barracks

John Healey: [\[161225\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

Regent's Park Barracks is 3.331 hectares in size.

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

■ Royal Artillery Barracks

John Healey: [\[161231\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

The information requested 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

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Politics and Government

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[159088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the security situation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

James Heappey:

To tackle the diverse threats in Sub-Saharan Africa, we have developed integrated security offers to protect our interests, tackling the upstream drivers of terrorism, and working with our partners to enhance and modernise their security capacity and capabilities to ensure lasting stability in the region. Furthermore, we are increasing our efforts to support African-led multilateral initiatives, such as the Accra Initiative, to encourage African leadership in responding to security challenges. We closely align our plans with the Allies to ensure that we are burden sharing across Africa. We regularly assess our programmes of activity for impact and value for money.

■ Vauxhall Barracks

John Healey: [\[160197\]](#)

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

■ Victoria Barracks Windsor

John Healey: [\[161223\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[161227\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[161229\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[161233\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[161235\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

Victoria Barracks, Windsor is 2.142 hectares in size.

Hyde Park Barracks is 1.402 hectares in size.

Wellington Barracks is 4.516 hectares in size.

Chattenden Camp is 184.317 hectares in size.

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

Lodge Hill Camp was disposed of in January 2018.

EDUCATION

■ Educational Institutions: Ukraine

Claudia Webbe: [\[160455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many universities have twinned with Ukrainian universities and institutions; and which universities have twinned with which Ukrainian institutions.

Claudia Webbe: [\[160456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Ukrainian, (b) British, (c) Commonwealth and (d) international students who were studying in Ukraine are now being supported by UK universities.

Robert Halfon:

In June 2022, the government announced funding to support the UK Ukraine Twinning Programme. The programme provides financial and professional support to Ukrainian universities by establishing partnerships with those in the UK. The full list of partnerships is available at: <https://www.twinningukraine.com/signed-partnerships>.

While the department does not hold data on how many Ukrainian, British, Commonwealth and international students who were studying in Ukraine are now being supported by UK universities, the government remains committed to supporting students affected by the war in Ukraine, ensuring they have options available to them.

This includes making it clear to higher education (HE) providers that they should be as flexible as possible when considering applications for students who were studying in Ukraine. In addition, to support those who are granted leave under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and have enrolled at UK universities, the department has extended access to HE student support, home fee status, tuition fee caps, advanced learner loans, and 19+ funding allocations. This ensures Ukrainian students who have been affected by the war in Ukraine can access support on the same basis as those within other protection-based categories, such as refugees.

■ Energy Bills Support Scheme: Students**Paul Blomfield:****[160256]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that university students in private rental accommodation (a) are receiving or (b) have received payment from the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Robert Halfon:

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and impacted students.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide £400 support to those households without a direct relationship to a domestic electricity supplier in England, Scotland, and Wales, who have faced increased energy bill costs since 1 October 2022. This will include students in privately rented accommodation, where they receive their energy from an intermediary, such as a landlord or letting agency, who holds a commercial electricity contract.

The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 includes the provision which requires landlords to pass any benefits they receive from energy price support onto end users, as appropriate.

Tenants should not need to take action to receive this benefit as the obligation is on intermediaries, such as landlords, to pass through the benefit and provide the

information necessary to do so. If a student believes this obligation has not been met, they are advised to contact their landlord or an intermediary to resolve this in the first instance. Within the regulations, there is also scope to pursue enforcement through civil proceedings.

Further guidance on the pass-through requirement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-provided-to-intermediaries/guidance-on-the-pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-in-great-britain-provided-to-intermediaries>.

Students in purpose-built student accommodation are not eligible to receive support under the scheme. With fixed rental fees set ahead of the academic year, these students have not been exposed to unexpectedly higher energy bill costs this winter.

For students living in university or private halls, businesses, including those providing student accommodation, are covered by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which provides energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in Great Britain.

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

■ Higher Education: Suicide

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[160248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the number of suicides committed by persons in full-time Higher Education in each of the last five years.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[160249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of suicides committed by persons in full-time Higher Education.

Robert Halfon:

Every suicide is a tragedy. The government is committed to doing all we can to prevent these devastating events which we know have a profound and lasting impact on family and friends.

The Office for National Statistics published a refreshed dataset on suicide in the higher education (HE) population on 31 May 2022, available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/estimating-suicide-among-higher-education-students-in-england-and-wales-experimental-statistics-2017-to-2020>. This dataset shows that the suicide rate for HE students in England and Wales for the academic year ending 2020 was lower than in the past four years. The HE student suicide rate is also lower when compared with the general population and with the same age group, however the numbers per year mean we have to be cautious in our interpretation of this data.

It is a high priority for the government that students get effective mental health and wellbeing support, and that action is taken to prevent future tragedies. The department expects all universities to take active steps to prevent suicides, to intervene and support students at risk, and to deal sensitively when a tragedy occurs. We continue to work closely with the Office for Students (OfS) and the HE sector to promote and fund effective practice which ensures that students are well supported.

We support the Suicide Safer Universities framework, led by Universities UK and Papyrus. This helps university leaders prevent student suicides and better support students and families with bereavement. Its approach has been widely adopted and is a key component of the University Mental Health Charter led by Student Minds.

To ensure that all students have access to dedicated mental health support no matter where they study, the department asked the OfS to fund Student Space, a mental health and wellbeing online platform for students, with up to £3.6 million invested so far. It has been accessed by over 250,000 students since its launch in August 2020.

OfS has allocated an additional £15 million in the 2022/23 financial year help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university and to support better joined up working with NHS services. This funding targets those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

This government is also investing at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year to expand and transform mental health services by 2023/24 as part of the NHS Long Term Plan.

The department will continue to work closely with experts to ensure that we are taking all necessary steps to prevent suicides among university students.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Maria Eagle:

[\[160212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of flu on pupils' attendance over winter 2022-23.

Nick Gibb:

Regular school attendance is important for pupils' educational progress, their wellbeing, and their wider development.

As this is the first winter without pandemic restrictions in two years, pupils and adults may be more susceptible to the usual winter bugs and viruses this year. December saw high levels of illness in pupils and young people including flu, scarlet fever, group A streptococcus and COVID-19 that will have contributed to high levels of absence. In previous years, there has been more seasonal spread of these infections. For example, group A streptococcus usually peaks in March. More recently there have been reductions in the incidence of these infections, but it cannot yet be predicted if there will be further resurgences.

During the week commencing 12 December, the weekly illness absence rate was at its highest level since the start of 2022 autumn term. The illness absence rate was 9.1%, which was up from 7.5% in the previous week and 2.6% at the start of term. In the latest data between 6 to 10 February 2023, the total weekly illness absence rate was 3.9%.

In the 2022 autumn term, all primary school aged pupils in England were offered a flu vaccination by the NHS school-aged immunisation service to manage the spread of some winter illnesses, such as flu. The Department has also provided over 8,000 air cleaning units to schools that identified poorly ventilated spaces. These devices filter airborne respiratory aerosols from the air. The Department hopes this will have a positive impact on sickness absence going forward.

■ Teachers: Strikes

Damien Moore:

[\[160391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recent industrial action by teachers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has made a serious offer to the National Education Union (NEU) to discuss pay and conditions. The only precondition the Department set is that the talks occur in a constructive atmosphere without the distraction of ongoing strikes. The Royal College of Nursing was made the same offer, along with the GMB, Unison, Unite, and CSP, who represent nurses, ambulance workers and physiotherapists, all of whom have agreed to pause strike action and are currently engaged in intensive talks with Government.

It is therefore disappointing that the NEU proceeded with national strike action on 1 February, and regional strike action between 28 February and 2 March. Many parents and pupils will have faced disruption. The Department is hugely grateful to headteachers, teachers, and support staff who continued to work, ensuring over 90% of schools remained open to some or all pupils during the national strikes, with similar levels seen during the regional strikes.

Young people have suffered more disruption to their education than any generation before and it is the work of teachers that is helping them to get back on track. The Department does not want to see anything that risks undoing that progress. That is why the Department is looking to find a reasonable way to address unions' concerns that does not exacerbate the rise in inflation and minimises any potential impact on Departmental policy.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has reiterated the offer to the NEU to pause strike action and engage in serious talks with the Government in all areas of their dispute, including pay.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Coal: Imports****Mark Jenkinson:**[\[160427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the impact of importing coking coal by ship on carbon emissions.

Graham Stuart:

The Department does not intend to make any estimate of the impact of importing coking coal by ship on carbon emissions.

■ Electricity Generation: Contracts**Jim Shannon:**[\[160276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether project developers will be able to bid for Contracts for Difference contracts in future auctions given that consent is required from the Northern Ireland Executive.

Graham Stuart:

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is currently only open to generators in Great Britain (GB) and aligned to the GB market. In June 2022, Northern Irish and then BEIS Ministers agreed that the CfD scheme would not be extended to Northern Ireland due to system complexities. The Department for the Economy (DfE) is currently running a consultation on Design Considerations for its own bespoke Renewables Support Scheme.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme**Daisy Cooper:**[\[160428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether a review mechanism is in place to ensure that energy companies calculating subsidies for their customers as part of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme cannot overclaim subsidies for customer accounts which have been billed using estimated readings by the supplier.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) established a robust enforcement and compliance regime, applicable across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to ensure suppliers are passing on to end users a correctly calculated EBRS discount, as set out in legislation.

This includes ensuring that energy companies do not overclaim subsidies for customers' accounts. Energy suppliers are required to submit validating billing data on the value of gas and electricity supplied to customers. Claims are reviewed through a series of checks to prevent fraud including overclaiming of subsidies. Where overclaiming is identified this will become part of regular reconciliation of energy supplier claims.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: West Dunbartonshire**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** [\[160297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many businesses in West Dunbartonshire constituency (a) applied for, (b) received support from and (c) did not receive support from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible businesses in Stockport, who receive their energy from licensed suppliers, are protected from excessively high energy costs over the winter period. The EBRS discount is applied directly to the energy bills of eligible businesses by their energy providers and therefore we do not have a breakdown of support received by location or sector. The new Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS) will run from April 2023 until March 2024 and continue to provide a discount to eligible businesses.

■ Energy Bills Rebate**Alex Sobel:** [\[160376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many private suppliers were not included in the initial energy rebate programme.

Amanda Solloway:

All licensed domestic electricity suppliers are participating in delivering the Energy Bills Support Scheme. On 25th September 2022, The then Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy issued a Direction under Section 7(3) of the Electricity Act 1989 to enable Ofgem to implement the scheme through modifications to suppliers' standard licence conditions.

Households without a licensed domestic electricity supply contract are not eligible for the Scheme and can apply for equivalent support through the EBSS Alternative Funding.

Companies supplying no more than 5MW of electricity which they generate themselves, of which only 2.5MW are supplied to domestic consumers, are not required to hold or register for a supply licence.

■ Energy: Care Homes and Hospices**Martin Docherty-Hughes:** [\[160302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support is available for (a) hospices and (b) care homes to meet their energy costs.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible charities, including hospices and care homes, are protected from high energy costs over the winter period. Following an HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme, will run from April 2023 until

March 2024, and continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including the health and care sector. Both energy schemes apply across all of the United Kingdom, including Scotland. The Government will continue to engage with devolved administrations in its design and implementation plans for the new scheme.

■ **NHS: Energy Bill Relief Scheme**

Feryal Clark:

[\[160445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much support has been provided to (a) the NHS and (b) NHS trusts under the Energy Bills Relief Scheme in 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure all eligible customers, including the NHS and NHS trusts, who buy energy from licensed suppliers, are protected from excessively high energy costs over the winter period.

The EBRS discount is applied directly to the energy bills of eligible customers, including the NHS and NHS trusts by their energy providers and therefore we do not have a breakdown of support received by location or sector. The new Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS) will run from April 2023 until March 2024 and continue to provide a discount to eligible NHS trusts.

■ **Nuclear Power Stations: Construction**

John Redwood:

[\[160097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of how long it will take to place contracts to build new smaller nuclear power stations.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK is one of the best places in the world to invest in new nuclear and intends to take one project to Final Investment Decision (FID) this Parliament and two projects to FID in the next Parliament, including Small Modular Reactors. As with any Government decision, this will be subject to value for money, relevant approvals, and technology readiness/maturity.

The Government also intends to initiate a selection process in 2023, with the intention to enter negotiations with the most credible projects to enable a potential Government award of support as soon as possible.

■ **Nuclear Power Stations: Decommissioning**

John Redwood:

[\[160098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate his Department has made of retirement dates for existing nuclear power stations.

Andrew Bowie:

EDF has recently announced that Heysham 1 and Hartlepool Nuclear Power Stations will continue to operate until March 2026, an extension of two years. Heysham 2 and Torness Power Station are currently planned to generate until 2028, and Sizewell B is expected to continue generation past 2028.

Offshore Industry: Natural Gas and Oil**John Redwood:**[\[160096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent estimate he has made of the level of (a) oil and (b) gas production in the UK in the next two years.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero does not estimate levels of future UK oil and gas production. Projections are made by the North Sea Transition Authority and are published here: <https://www.nstauthority.co.uk/data-centre/data-downloads-and-publications/production-projections/>.

Pre-payment: Meters**Damien Moore:**[\[160389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure energy companies remove prepayment meters that have been installed in households that are classed as vulnerable.

Amanda Solloway:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero has written to energy suppliers making it clear that providing appropriate remedial action to consumers who have been wrongly forced onto a prepayment meter is critical.

Ofgem has called on all suppliers to proactively check if any prepayment meters have been installed incorrectly and, where rules have been broken, to act now to offer customers a reversal of installations and compensation payments where appropriate. Ofgem also has powers to fine suppliers, if appropriate, to tackle non-compliance.

The Government will continue to engage with Ofgem and suppliers to ensure sufficient action is taken.

Renewable Energy: Electricity Generation**John Redwood:**[\[160099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an estimate of the additional grid capacity the UK will need in 10 years' time to meet the increased demand for electricity and increased renewable supply.

Graham Stuart:

Analysis set out in the Electricity Networks Strategic Framework^[1], jointly published by BEIS and Ofgem, suggests grid capacity would need to increase to accommodate

a peak electricity demand of between 85-90GW by 2033, up from around 60 GW in 2023.

^[1] BEIS, 2022, *Electricity networks strategic framework, Appendix 1: Electricity Networks Modelling, section 2.1, p. 12, figure 2*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electricity-networks-strategic-framework>

■ Small Modular Reactors: Procurement

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[160234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what plans he has for small modular reactors to contribute to (a) net zero and (b) energy security; and whether he has discussed these goals with Rolls Royce SMR Ltd.

Andrew Bowie:

The British Energy Security Strategy (BESS) announced that Government will scope and set up Great British Nuclear (GBN), a body to help projects through every stage of the development process and develop a resilient pipeline of new build projects.

There remains a wide range of nuclear technologies available for deployment, including small modular reactors (SMRs). SMRs have the potential to play a key role in the UK's future energy mix as we transition to Net Zero in 2050 and in supporting our energy security.

The Department's engagement with Rolls Royce SMR Ltd and with vendors across all technologies reflects the Government's policy priorities, and ambitions, in line with the BESS.

■ Tidal Power

Giles Watling:

[\[160406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will meet with a delegation of tidal range developers to discuss support for the advancement of tidal power.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is open to considering well-developed proposals for harnessing the tidal range energy in the bays and estuaries around our coastlines, including barrage schemes and other alternatives. The developers should write to my office in the first instance and set out the issues they would like to explore in discussion.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Ruth Jones:

[\[160422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities on improving indoor air quality; and when those discussions took place.

Rebecca Pow:

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has convened a cross- Departmental and agency Indoor Air Quality working group. Defra contributes both scientific and policy input to this.

■ **Consultants****Emily Thornberry:**[\[158849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost to the public purse was of spending on external consultants by (a) the Environment Agency, (b) Natural England and (c) the Water Services Regulation Authority 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.

Rebecca Pow:**(a) Environment Agency**

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONSULTANCY (£M)
2019/20	14
2020/21	8.5
2021/22	8.2

Notes:

1. Source: Environment Agency annual report and accounts table 'Expenditure on temporary workforce'
2. The above figures relate to total spending and not the 'cost to the public purse', as some of this will be charge or recharge funded.
3. None of the above spending related to preparation or creation of any bids for Defra or HM Treasury.

(b) Natural England

As per the definition of consultancy which is "The provision to management of objective advice relating to strategy, structure, management or operations of an organisation. Such advice will be provided outside the 'business-as-usual' environment when in-house skills are not available and will be time-limited", Natural England incurred nil consultancy spend in 2020 and 2021.

In 2022 £18,100 consultancy spend was incurred for the provision of specialist advice for the Customer Spending Review.

(c) Water Services Regulation Authority

Ofwat's spend on external consultants is listed in its Annual Report and Accounts:

<https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ARA-final.pdf> (see page 84);

and previous year <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Ofwat-Annual-report-and-accounts-2020-2021.pdf> (see page 92).

■ **Sewage: Tourist Attractions**

Tim Farron:

[158875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the impact of beach closures due to sewage release on the tourism industry.

Rebecca Pow:

Our [Storm Overflows Evidence Project](#) assessed the impact of sewage discharges on bathing waters and the social impact where knowledge and visibility of storm overflows causes public concern. We used this evidence to inform our [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Development Aid**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[160247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to reinstate the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund; and what adjustments have been made to ensure no direct benefit from that scheme accrues to the Taliban.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has been instrumental in unlocking more than \$1 billion of funds held within the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the ARTF has provided grants to United Nations agencies to support agriculture, education, health, and livelihoods activities. ARTF expenditure does not involve the interim Taliban administration and does not go through their ministries. All funding is subject to strict monitoring and verification to minimise fiduciary risks.

■ **Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[160245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to (a) accelerate payment of the £286m of humanitarian assistance committed to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan; how much of that funding has been distributed to-date; and when the remainder of the funding will be distributed.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is providing life-saving aid to the most vulnerable Afghans. Since April 2021, the UK has disbursed £515 million to help urgently address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We have disbursed £229 million in aid for Afghanistan since April 2022,

including payments to the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (£50 million), World Food Programme (£95 million) and UNICEF (£28 million). A further £17 million is due for disbursement in March 2023.

We are supporting 4 million people with food assistance through the World Food Programme this financial year (FY22/23) and continue to support basic services, such as health, education and livelihoods.

Sarah Champion: [\[160295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to take steps to help prevent the male-only delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK condemns the Taliban's decision to suspend Afghan women from working for NGOs in Afghanistan. We continue to press the Taliban for a reversal of the edict and make clear that Afghan women are vital to the delivery of humanitarian and development operations in Afghanistan.

The UK is working with international partners and NGOs to collectively find solutions that enable women to play an inclusive role in the design, delivery and monitoring of humanitarian assistance.

Ruth Jones: [\[160420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to allocate the £286 million of humanitarian assistance committed to Afghanistan; how much of that funding has been distributed; and when he plans to distribute the remainder of that funding.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is providing life-saving aid to the most vulnerable Afghans. Since April 2021, the UK has disbursed £515 million to help urgently address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We have disbursed £229 million in aid for Afghanistan since April 2022, including payments to the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (£50 million), World Food Programme (£95 million) and UNICEF (£28 million). A further £17m is due for disbursement in March 2023.

We are supporting 4 million people with food assistance through the World Food Programme this financial year (FY22/23) and continue to support basic services, such as health, education and livelihoods.

■ Cyprus: Conflict Resolution

Giles Watling: [\[160405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the role of the UK in helping to preserve peace in Cyprus.

Leo Docherty:

We remain committed to supporting UN efforts to reach a just and lasting Cyprus settlement within the UN parameters, as stressed by the Foreign Secretary when he met the former Cypriot Foreign Minister Kasoulides in November. The UK actively engages with all parties on this and contributes to the settlement process in a number of ways, including through our deployment of military personnel to UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. In January we led the drafting of the UNSC resolution to renew the mandate of the Peacekeeping Force, which was unanimously adopted by the UNSC, maintaining the Council's longstanding unity on Cyprus.

■ Developing Countries: Children and Drinking Water**Jim Shannon:**[\[160275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase (a) access to safe and affordable drinking water and (b) the quality of life of young children.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

WASH is an essential part of the UK's work on global health and education. To maximise impact when providing safe and affordable drinking water, we are changing our approach from direct delivery to helping governments strengthen the systems that they need to deliver sustainable, resilient and inclusive WASH services at scale.

Our systems approach benefits the quality of life of children, and forms part of our work on ending the preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children. Our support promotes equitable access to nutritious diets, quality health services, addresses health impacts of climate change and improves access to WASH services.

■ Development Aid: Women**Sarah Champion:**[\[160294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to ringfence official development assistance spending on projects for women and girls in upcoming spending plans.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We intend to update on the spending commitments set out in the International Development Strategy once we have worked through decisions with our partners and suppliers.

This financial year, we will prioritise spend in line with the Strategy, particularly focussing on humanitarian programmes and women and girls - while also taking the potential new and emerging needs and priorities of our partner countries into account.

Through our new Women and Girls Strategy, at least 80% of FCDO's bilateral aid programmes will have a focus on gender equality. This is a reflection of how we are prioritising gender and equality across our work.

■ Embassies: LGBT+ People**David Mundell:**[\[160230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to hold Pride receptions in June in embassies and posts to celebrate LGBTQ+ people.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is proud to champion LGBT+ rights around the world. Through our international programmes and diplomatic engagement, we bring communities and governments together to strengthen rights and freedoms in every part of the world. The UK's diplomatic missions are encouraged to host events, receptions and joint statements with like-minded partners to celebrate local LGBT+ communities as well as to attend Pride parades. Support will also be given to UK missions this year to deliver the UK's new GREAT Love marketing campaign to highlight the UK's commitment to inclusion.

■ Embassies: World AIDS Day**David Mundell:**[\[160229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to hold World AIDS Day receptions in embassies and posts on 1 December.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK remains a world leader in efforts to end the AIDS epidemic and continues to fund all key partners in the global AIDS response, including UNAIDS, the WHO and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. We recognise the importance of World AIDS Day for raising awareness and galvanising the global AIDS response. We will be planning our engagements for the next World AIDS Day on 1 December 2023 nearer to the time.

■ Georgia: Politics and Government**Mark Pritchard:**[\[160235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed foreign agent law in Georgia on NGO support for (a) internally displaced persons, (b) enhancing the rule of law and (c) strengthening democracy.

Leo Docherty:

We welcome the news that the Georgian Government has announced that its draft "foreign agents" law will be withdrawn. The draft law, had it been adopted, would likely have harmed Georgia's democratic development through hindering the ability of Georgia's friends and international partners to support civil society and media freedom. It would have made delivery of UK programming extremely challenging. The UK remains committed to supporting a vibrant civil society in Georgia, an essential attribute of a healthy democracy, and remains a committed supporter of Georgia's

continued integration into Euro-Atlantic structures in line with the wishes of the Georgian people.

■ Humanitarian Aid

Sarah Champion:

[\[160296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the safeguarding implications of humanitarian actors distributing aid through male-only teams.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The available evidence suggests that most safeguarding violations linked to the delivery of humanitarian assistance are committed by men and that most of the survivors and victims are women and girls. Given the power imbalances inherent in the distribution of humanitarian assistance the safeguarding risks are likely to be lowered by having women actively involved in distribution work. The UK continues to advocate for and actively support the recruitment, training and protection of women in humanitarian work to help reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and other forms of harm.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Dan Carden:

[\[160372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking diplomatic steps to support the creation of mechanisms for (a) reporting and (b) addressing alleged violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Leo Docherty:

We continue to closely monitor the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK continues to provide the Palestinian Authority (PA) with professional support in helping develop its security institutions. This provision includes training and other technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Interior and PA security forces, to support the development of capable, responsible security forces that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people. The Foreign Secretary has made clear that the UK wants to see a de-escalation of tensions in Israel and the OPTs in his phone calls with both the Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen and Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Malki on 7 March, and we continue to encourage all sides to take action which delivers this.

■ Pakistan: Elections

Catherine West:

[\[162524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Pakistani counterpart on the operation of free and fair elections in that country.

Leo Docherty:

We engage regularly with the Government of Pakistan to advance our shared priorities and interests, including upholding democracy through free, credible and inclusive elections.

■ Tunisia: Racial Discrimination**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[160236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement by the President of Tunisia on 21 February on immigration, whether he plans to hold discussions with his counterparts in Tunisia on the potential impact of that statement on (a) commitments under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and (b) rates of hate crimes and racial discrimination against citizens of other African states in Tunisia.

Leo Docherty:

The statement by President Kais Saied on 21 February led to an alarming and rapid increase in instances of racially motivated discrimination and violence in Tunisia, primarily towards migrants of Sub-Saharan African origin, but also other Black people, including Tunisians. We have followed these developments closely and updated our Travel Advice. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunis announced new measures on 5 March to extend residency rights for people from African countries, improve the safety and security of migrants, including more flexible regulations towards irregular migrants. The UK underlines the importance of equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

■ West Bank: Human Rights and Humanitarian Situation**Dan Carden:**[\[160373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) humanitarian and (b) human rights situation in the occupied West Bank.

Leo Docherty:

Human Rights are a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. The UK continues to engage with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority on human rights issues where they exist. We call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. It is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law and avoid civilian casualties. The Foreign Secretary has made this clear to Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen during a phone call on 7 March.

■ Windsor Framework

Mr David Jones:

[\[161246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to paragraph 8 of The Windsor Framework: a new way forward, CP806, what the more than 1,700 pages of EU rules are; and if he will place copies of them in the Library of the House.

Leo Docherty:

We have published the legal instruments that make up the Windsor Framework, which set out how the relevant EU rules are disapplied, and both the UK and EU will respectively take forward further legislative measures to translate those solutions into law. The legal text on the agrifood green lane, for example, lists the 67 EU rules which are disapplied there. Through these changes we have ensured that it is UK authorities which approve medicines for the whole UK market; that changes on alcohol duties and VAT rates on the installation of energy-saving materials apply UK-wide; ensure consumer parcels are moved without customs processes; allow plants, trees and seeds to be able to move under the same UK plant passport arrangements as for elsewhere in the UK; and for agrifood products in the green lane to meet UK food and drink safety standards.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Charities

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[162252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he, or any of his Ministers last met with a leading ADHD charity.

Maria Caulfield:

The Secretary of State and other Departmental Ministers regularly engage with external organisations on a range of issues relating to health and social care. These are routinely published on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Justin Madders:

[\[162513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to discontinue the covid-19 dashboard.

Maria Caulfield:

The COVID-19 Dashboard has formed a critical part of the overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the value of making data on health threats publicly available. As we continue living with COVID-19, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is exploring options for building on this success by making additional data available to partners and the public on a wider range of threats to public health which reflect the breadth of UKHSA's remit.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Ian Byrne: [\[147116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons community Covid-19 vaccination clinics, including the Tuebrook Hope Centre, have been closed with a short notice period.

Ian Byrne: [\[147117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community Covid-19 vaccination clinics have been (a) closed and (b) issued with a notice of closure in Liverpool West Derby constituency in 2023.

Ian Byrne: [\[147118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community Covid-19 vaccination clinics have been issued with notice of closure in Liverpool constituency in 2023 .

Ian Byrne: [\[147119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community Covid-19 vaccination clinics have been issued with notice of closure in 2023.

Ian Byrne: [\[147122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the closure of Covid-19 community vaccination clinics on the staff (a) employed and (b) due to be employed, at the site.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 February 2023]: Following the completion of the Autumn COVID-19 Booster Programme on 12 February 2023, NHS England and local providers have considered the ongoing provision of vaccination sites for COVID-19. NHS England and providers have established whether sites are likely to see unacceptable vaccine wastage, insufficient patient demand, or operate with reduced value for money over the coming months. Decisions on whether to pause or close sites are made at local level between commissioners and providers, with commissioners considering representation from Primary Care Network groupings and/or pharmacy contractors.

Between January 2023 and February 2023, 577 sites have now closed in England, including Tuebrook Hope Centre which is within the Liverpool West Derby constituency and 12 other COVID-19 community vaccination centres within the Liverpool area. An additional seven sites are in the process of closing in England.

Since the COVID-19 vaccination programme began almost 30,000 people in England have moved from the programme into wider health and care training and career pathways. Many staff members have continued working in the National Health Service on flexible or NHS bank contracts and as volunteers. NHS England has worked to retain staff able to support with any future vaccination campaigns with integrated care boards setting out retention plans to maintain the vaccination workforce and to minimise the impact of vaccination site closures on employed staff.

NHS England also works with external organisations to retain volunteers including St John Ambulance, where over 900 volunteers have gone on to work in other roles in the NHS.

■ Endometriosis: Health Services

Munira Wilson:

[\[161428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the time between a woman first presenting with symptoms of endometriosis to (a) being diagnosed and (b) receiving treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

The Women's Health Strategy sets out our ambition for improving care for women and girls with endometriosis, with a reduced diagnosis time for those with severe endometriosis. Patients with symptoms of endometriosis will be prioritised based on clinical need. Endometriosis can only be definitively diagnosed through a laparoscopy under general anaesthetic, and it can be more appropriate to treat mild symptoms of endometriosis without a definitive diagnosis, avoiding the need for an invasive procedure.

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

■ General Practitioners: Standards

Wes Streeting:

[\[161354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients who contacted out-of-hours GP services successfully met a GP for a face-to-face appointment in 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ General Practitioners: Working Hours

Wes Streeting:

[\[161355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many out-of-hours shifts were worked by GPs in each of the past eight years.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 14 March 2023]: The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Health Professions: Standards

Philip Davies:

[\[163845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the policies are of healthcare regulations on the publication of (a) fitness to practice decisions, (b) sanctions and (c) warnings when a person changes their gender and requests their former public record is suppressed.

Maria Caulfield:

Professional Regulators have a statutory duty to ensure patient safety and public protection and one way in which they achieve this is by publishing relevant information relating to a professional's fitness to practise. A healthcare professional's fitness to practise record is tied to their unique registration record held by the relevant regulatory body, which will remain associated with the individual throughout their career. This is regardless of whether a professional changes their name and or gender. As independent bodies, the policies relating to publication of such information is a matter for each professional regulator, within the scope of their governing legislation and in line with existing data legislation and other law.

■ Health: Older People

Jim Shannon:

[\[163752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what specific steps he is taking to support the health and wellbeing of people aged over 70 in the UK.

Neil O'Brien:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is pushing forward an ambitious prevention agenda, encompassing targeted actions to tackle the most common preventable diseases, improving access and uptake of prevention services, and embedding prevention across health and care. For example, encouraging people in mid-life to stop smoking, reduce their alcohol consumption and improve their diet to help reduce the risk of developing dementia, disability and frailty in later life.

The NHS Health Check detects people at risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Compared to people who have not attended an NHS Health Check, attendees have significantly lower likelihood of hospital admissions for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. This reduces individuals' risk of ill health later in life.

Finally, the Government recently announced that it will publish a Major Conditions Strategy which will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care. The Strategy will tackle conditions that contribute most to morbidity and mortality across the population in England including cancers, cardiovascular disease, including stroke and diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, dementia, mental ill health and musculoskeletal conditions. An interim report will be published in the summer.

■ Maternity Disparities Taskforce

Anneliese Dodds: [\[161406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how often the Maternity Disparities Taskforce meets.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[161407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Maternity Disparities Taskforce last met.

Maria Caulfield:

The Maternal Disparities Taskforce was established in February 2022, to tackle disparities for mothers and babies by improving access to effective pre-conception and maternity care for women from ethnic minorities and those living in the most deprived areas. The Taskforce has so far met three times with the third meeting taking place on 18 July 2022. A date for the next Taskforce meeting will be confirmed in due course.

■ Maternity Services: Finance

Feryal Clark: [\[162320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Final report of the Ockenden review, published on 30 March 2022, when the Government plans to increase maternity funding by the £200 to 350 million per annum recommended by that report.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England invested £127 million into the maternity system in 2022 which will go towards the National Health Service maternity workforce and improving neonatal care. We will keep further funding under review.

■ Menopause

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[162164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of women who (a) have reached menopause and (b) are in perimenopause as of 9 March 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

Based on the Office for National Statistics population estimates, approximately 400,000 women in the United Kingdom reach menopause each year. We do not have an estimate for the number of women who are in perimenopause as of 9 March 2023.

■ Mental Health Services

Stephen Morgan: [\[162271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to integrate the ambitions set out in the Mental Health Plan with the Major Conditions Strategy.

Stephen Morgan: [\[162272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons his Department launched the Major Conditions Strategy which features mental health services instead of the Mental Health Plan.

Maria Caulfield:

Mental health is one of the six conditions on which the Major Conditions Strategy will focus. The Strategy will cover prevention and treatment for all six conditions and we will continue to work closely with stakeholders, citizens and the National Health Service in coming weeks to identify actions that will have the most impact. Bringing mental ill health and other conditions together will enable us to take a holistic approach, recognising the increasing multimorbidity and complexity of diseases.

In response to the Mental Health and Well-Being call for evidence, we received over 5,000 responses from individuals and organisations representing a range of different views and groups. These are being considered in the development of both the Major Conditions Strategy and separate Suicide Prevention Strategy.

■ Mental Health Services: Standards

Damien Moore: [\[160385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department is taking to help improve access to mental health services.

Maria Caulfield:

We are committed to improving access to mental health services. Through the National Health Service Long Term Plan, we are investing at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 so that an additional two million people can access NHS-funded mental health support.

We also provided an additional £500 million for 2021/22, to accelerate our NHS mental health expansion plans and to target groups whose mental health have been most affected by the pandemic including those with severe mental illness, young people, and frontline staff.

■ Neurology: Standards

Stephen Morgan: [\[162275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to improve the quality of care for patients with (a) Huntington's disease and (b) other neurological conditions.

Helen Whately:

NHS England plans to improve the quality of care for Huntington's disease and other neurological conditions through continued developments to Neuroscience services.

Genomic testing for patients with Huntington disease is included on the Test Directory under the R.68 and R383 clinical indication. Over the last 12 months the NHS Genomics Medicines Service has carried out over 900 tests for these clinical indications.

NHS England's neuroscience transformation programme (NSTP) is developing a number of optimal pathways for neurology services which includes Huntington's disease. Following extensive stakeholder engagement, the NSTP is developing a new definition for 'specialised' neurology and a model for neurology services. The transformation programme will provide integrated care systems (ICS) with the tools, information and resources, they will need to drive the transformation in their neurology services, as they take on joint or delegated responsibility for commissioning specialised neurology services from April 2023 onwards.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Screening**Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[162304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to improve the provision of tests to screen for pancreatic cancer (a) in general and (b) for patients with a recorded family history of the disease.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans to introduce a screening programme for pancreatic cancer. Approximately ten percent of pancreatic cancers are caused by hereditary factors. NHS England has been working with Pancreatic Cancer UK and others on opportunities to improve access to surveillance, in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance, for those with inherited high risk of pancreatic cancer. Cancer Alliances are preparing to support this work in 2023/24.

■ Pharmacy**Maria Eagle:**[\[160206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure patients nominated pharmacies are not altered without the patient's permission.

Maria Eagle:[\[160207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his officials have had discussions with NHS Digital on the switching of patients nominated pharmacies.

Maria Eagle:[\[160208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department allows private businesses to change a patient's nominated pharmacy without seeking the patients permission; if he will make statement.

Neil O'Brien:

The purpose of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) is to allow prescribers to send prescriptions electronically to a pharmacy of the patient's choice. A patient can choose to nominate a pharmacy and all prescriptions will be sent to the nominated pharmacy until the patient chooses to change or remove this nomination.

Changes to a patient nomination should only be made with the patient's consent. Although consent does not have to be provided in writing, there must be an auditable process in place.

Patients can change their current nomination using the National Health Service app or on the NHS website. General practitioners and pharmacies can also change a patient's nomination but only with the patient's consent. There are instances where prescriptions can be sent to another pharmacy as a one-off nomination instead of the patient's nominated pharmacy, but this must be done at the request of the patient.

In the event a pharmacy business changes hands as an on-going concern, NHS England asks the outgoing owners to inform their nominated patients that the pharmacy is being taken over and by whom, and to offer those patients the opportunity, during a time-limited window, to opt out of their nomination being transferred to the new owner.

Additionally, patients can choose not to nominate a pharmacy, in which case patients will receive an EPS token that includes a barcode, allowing any pharmacy with access to the EPS to retrieve the electronic prescription.

Smoking**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[161248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress the Government has made on achieving its objective of England to be smokefree by 2030.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The most recent Office for National Statistics data from December 2022 shows that adult smoking rates in England are continuing on a downward trend and at 13% the lowest rate on record. Youth smoking rates also continue to decline. The Government remains firmly committed to our bold ambition to be Smokefree by 2030 and we will be setting out further action to achieve this very soon.

Social Services: Finance**Liz Kendall:**[\[155091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £150 million of funding for the adoption of technology in the social care sector has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Liz Kendall: [\[155092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £500 million of funding to help improve the training and qualifications of the social care workforce has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Liz Kendall: [\[155094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £25 million of funding to help support services for unpaid carers has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Liz Kendall: [\[155095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £300 million of funding to integrate housing into local health and care strategies has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Liz Kendall: [\[155096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £30 million of funding for the innovation of support and care has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Liz Kendall: [\[155097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the white paper entitled People at the Heart of Care, published on 1 December 2021, how much and what proportion of the £70 million of funding to help improve the delivery of care and support services has been received by (a) local authorities and (b) integrated care boards since the announcement of that funding.

Helen Whately:

Further information about the "People at the Heart of Care" White Paper will be published shortly.

■ Tobacco

Andrew Gwynne: [\[162143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 March 2023 to Question 146834 on Tobacco, whether his Department plans to publish a Tobacco Control Plan separately to the Major Conditions Strategy.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 14 March 2023]: In due course, the Government will unveil a set of proposals to realise the Smokefree 2030 ambition and respond to the recommendations in the Khan Review. This will be separate to the Major Conditions Strategy.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[161214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will make a decision on the application under the vaccine damage payment scheme with reference VAD7272; and for what reason there has been a delay.

Maria Caulfield:

We are unable to provide the information requested as it relates to personal data from which a claimant could be identified. The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) updates all claimants directly on progress of individual claims. Claimants may also provide details of a nominated person with authority to act on their behalf to receive updates on their claim, by providing written confirmation to the NHSBSA. This process ensures sensitive information is protected in line with General Data Protection Regulation and remains confidential. Claimants or their nominated representative may also contact the NHSBSA directly for an update.

HOME OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[160246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to (a) identify eligible applicants of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme still within Afghanistan who meet the criteria for vulnerable minorities and (b) provide that information to the Foreign Office to assist in the implementation of the Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) has been designed to support those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values, as well as vulnerable people, including members of minority groups at risk.

Under Pathway 3, in the first year, places are being offered to eligible at-risk British Council contractors, GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni in Afghanistan or the region, and their dependents.

The FCDO is working hard across Government to progress referrals under Pathway 3. They received over 11,400 expressions of interest, which they have been assessing against the eligibility criteria. Any offer of resettlement will be subject to security screening and provision of biometric information.

The FCDO are notifying those who have completed initial security checks and providing advice on next steps. Some eligible individuals and their families have already arrived in third countries, where they are offered accommodation and support from the International Organisation for Migration. We look forward to welcoming the first arrivals to the UK under Pathway 3 as soon as practicable.

Further details on the eligibility criteria for the ACRS and how vulnerability is taken into consideration has been set out in the policy statement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement>.

Ruth Jones:

[160421]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to (a) identify eligible applicants of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme who remain within Afghanistan and meet the criteria for vulnerable minorities and (b) provide that information to the Foreign Office to assist in the implementation of the Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) has been designed to support those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values, as well as vulnerable people, including members of minority groups at risk.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement>.

■ Asylum Dispersal Grants: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[160454]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 20 February 2023 to Question 141595 on Asylum Dispersal Grants: Northern Ireland, how much funding he plans to allocate to The Executive Office under the Memorandum of

Understanding in 2023; and if he will set out the method for calculating that funding allocation.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is in discussion with HM Treasury to inform funding for Asylum Dispersal for 2023/24. We will share the outcome of those discussions with The Executive Office as soon as possible.

■ **Asylum: Harassment and Intimidation**

Cat Smith:

[\[160312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to prevent the intimidation and harassment of asylum seekers; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The wellbeing, welfare and safety of those in our care is our primary concern. Nobody should be subject to harassment or intimidation and anyone who experiences such treatment should ensure they report it to their local police force to take appropriate action.

For the many asylum seekers currently housed in hotels the Home Office has taken extensive action to ensure their safety. The Home Office and our accommodation providers work closely with the police and keep security under constant review.

Home Office contractors, their subcontractors and hotel staff on site are responsible for addressing the immediate safety and needs of those in their care. Security is in place at each site including a full team of security personnel on site 24 hours a day to ensure the safety of asylum seekers and staff in accommodation. All incidents at asylum accommodation sites are reported by providers to the Home Office immediately. We then work with the provider to put in additional safety measures if required.

■ **Asylum: Questionnaires**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[162112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what resources are being provided to support asylum seekers required to fill in the 11 page questionnaire in English and return it within 20 days.

Robert Jenrick:

The Streamlined Asylum Process policy guidance was published on 23 February 2023 ([Streamlined asylum processing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/streamlined-asylum-processing)). On the same day, questionnaires began to be sent out to legacy claimants from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria and Yemen to their most recently recorded correspondence address. These countries have been included in the streamlined asylum process on the basis of their high-grant rate of 95% or higher and over 100 grants in the year-ending September 2022 of protection status (refugee status or humanitarian protection). All questionnaires should be dispatched to eligible claimants by the end of March 2023.

The asylum claim questionnaires are in English as is generally the case for immigration paperwork across the Department. If necessary, claimants can utilise legal representatives, Non-Government Organisations and other support networks to help them respond to the questionnaire. For those who are unable to return the questionnaire within 20 working days, a reminder will be sent to the claimant allowing a further 10-working days to complete and return it to the Home Office. A further extension can be requested where the timeframe cannot be met, for example because the claimant has serious medical conditions which is impacting their ability to respond to the questionnaire.

The intention of these questionnaires is to enable claimants to provide any further information about their claims after their initial screening interview upon arrival.

■ **Drugs: Crime**

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[160100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of people with criminal records only have a conviction related to drug offences.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold any information on the proportion of people with criminal records who only have a conviction related to drug offences.

The Ministry of Justice publishes data on the number of convictions for drug offences on a quarterly basis. The most recent publication is available here: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-september-2022). In year ending September 2022, there were 73,731 convictions for drug offences. However, no information is available on whether or not those convicted of these offences had a previous conviction (either for drug offences or for another type of offence).

■ **Passports: Personal Records**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[160432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason HM Passport Office requires applicants to submit birth, marriage and death certificates; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of using General Register Office reference numbers.

Robert Jenrick:

HMPO requires applicants to submit birth, marriage and death certificates as part of the passport issuing process to enable determinations as to a customer's nationality, identity and eligibility for a British passport.

In some circumstances, HMPO is able to check against electronic birth data for births occurring in England and Wales rather than requesting a paper certificate.

■ Slavery

Fleur Anderson:

[161431]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 in ensuring the (a) reliable and accurate reporting of and (b) reduction of modern slavery in company supply chains since it came into force.

Robert Jenrick:

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses with a turnover of £36m or more to report annually on the steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

Compliance with section 54 is high. Following a Home Office commission, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre completed an audit of compliance with Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. The high-level findings of this audit were published on 17 September 2020 in the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's annual report (available here):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-annual-report-2019-to-2020>).

To further increase compliance with section 54, the [Government response to the Transparency in Supply Chains consultation](#), published on 22 September 2020, committed to taking forwards an ambitious package of measures to strengthen the Act's transparency legislation, including: extending the reporting requirement to public bodies with a budget of £36 million or more; mandating the specific reporting topics statements must cover; and requiring organisations to publish their statement on the new Government registry.

The Government has also committed to introduce financial penalties for organisations who fail to meet their statutory obligations to publish annual modern slavery statements. These measures require primary legislation and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

In March 2021, the Government launched the modern slavery statement registry as a key tool to monitor and improve compliance with Section 54. Since launch, over 9,800 modern slavery statements covering over 32,800 organisations have been voluntarily submitted.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Families

Cat Smith:

[160314]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Illegal Immigration Bill, what steps she plans to take to ensure that children are not separated from their parents.

Robert Jenrick:

Family groups with children will remain together wherever possible during the detention and removal process.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Pregnancy

Cat Smith:

[\[160313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether pregnant women will be exempt from immediate detention and removal under the Illegal Immigration Bill.

Robert Jenrick:

Appropriate healthcare provision will be provided for all those in immigration detention.

JUSTICE

■ Buildings: Insulation

Apsana Begum:

[\[160434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications to the first-tier tribunal have been made for remedial contributions orders since the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022; and how many remedial contributions orders were granted in the same period.

Mike Freer:

The First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) received 9 applications for Remedial Contribution Orders in the period from the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 to 31 December 2022, the most recent period for which data is available. Of these applications, 1 was granted during the same time period and the other 8 applications are awaiting a decision.

■ Family Courts: Mental Health Services

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[160433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help improve mental health support for parents during and after family court proceedings.

Mike Freer:

The Government is aware of the impact involvement in family court proceedings can have on the mental health of both the parents and children involved. Family breakdown is recognised as a difficult and often traumatic period in the lives of adults and children and appropriate support for those involved can be of huge value. This support, in the form of mental health services for adults, and for children and young people, is provided by a range of organisations including NHS mental health and community trusts, local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors, and the Government recognises the vital role these services can play in supporting parents and children both during and after family court proceedings.

To encourage separating couples to resolve their issues outside of the family courts, where safe and appropriate, the Government launched the Mediation Voucher Scheme in March 2021. Mediation can be quicker, cheaper and less stressful than attending court, and families can be referred to mediation – and the scheme, where

eligible – from court. As of 5 March 2023, the scheme has helped over 15,300 families to access mediation and divert suitable families away from the family courts, reducing exposure to the court procedure for both parents and children.

■ Probate: Standards

Jonathan Edwards: [\[162496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the length of time it takes for HM Courts and Tribunals Service to complete a grant of probate application.

Mike Freer:

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the probate service during the Covid 19 pandemic, and the increased volume of applications that have been seen since, the average length of time taken for a grant of probate following receipt of all the documents required has been maintained at between five and seven weeks – with the average responses being almost 1 week faster in quarter 3 of 2022 than the yearly average for 2020 and 2021.

HMCTS has increased resources to meet the higher demand following an increased number of estates requiring probate and is further increasing resourcing to further bring down overall timeliness on digital and paper applications.

Average waiting times for probate grants, up to September 2022, are routinely published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 24):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2022>.

Information covering up to December 2022 will be published on 30 March.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Green Belt: Hertfordshire

Daisy Cooper: [\[162538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent correspondence his Department has received from Hertfordshire County Council on whether there have been any significant changes in circumstances since 2014 relating to the status of the greenbelt when considering the sale of public land for major infrastructure projects.

Rachel Maclean:

If the Hon. Member has some specific correspondence in mind, she is welcome to contact me directly.

As has been the case for many years, inappropriate development on land within a Green Belt should be refused planning permission unless, in the authority's view, very special circumstances justify it.

■ Land: Registration

Andrew Selous:

[\[160223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the use of the land and property register by local authorities for the enforcement of planning law.

Rachel Maclean:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

The Government is keen to ensure that local planning authorities have the right tools to allow them to take effective enforcement action. Good quality Land Registry data can be an important source of information to support enforcement action.

■ Leasehold: Reform

Bill Esterson:

[\[162501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to publish a draft bill on leasehold reform.

Rachel Maclean:

We are due to bring forward further leasehold reforms later in this Parliament.

We welcome the work that has already been done by Parliamentarians to date to highlight the injustices and unfairness of the leasehold system. We will of course consider how best to involve Parliamentarians, and wider stakeholders in the development of future legislation.

■ Private Rented Housing: Students

Caroline Lucas:

[\[160244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department's policy on changing legislation to protect tenants who are students from no fault evictions has changed since the Consultation outcome, A new deal for renting: government response, Updated 16 June 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The department is carefully considering the impact of our reforms on the student market. Since the publication of the White Paper, we have continued to engage with stakeholders across the sector, including students and landlords. Ministers convened a round table with landlord and student representative groups in December 2022 to discuss our proposed reforms.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Alex Norris: [\[162264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of how much and proportion of the funding budgeted for the Shared Prosperity Fund in the 2022-23 financial year will be spent.

Alex Norris: [\[162265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on potential levels of underspend of the Shared Prosperity Fund in the 2022-23 financial year.

Dehenna Davison:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

The amount of UKSPF spend in the 2022-23 financial year will be quantified when local authorities submit monitoring reports at the end of the financial year.

Alex Norris: [\[162266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to support (a) charities and (b) community groups in accessing the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Dehenna Davison:

When developing investment plans and for delivery, all places work with local partnership groups, which represent local stakeholders from a diverse range of sectors, including the third sector.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Miriam Cates: [\[904143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps her Department is taking to protect landscapes while delivering Project Gigabit.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to ensuring everyone receives the coverage and connectivity they need and recognises the need to balance this with environmental considerations.

Broadband providers need to comply with the relevant planning requirements and legislation in conservation areas and protected landscapes.

This is supported by best practice guidance with Natural England and a joint accord with National Parks England on delivery of broadband within the 10 National Parks in England.

Penistone and Stocksbridge constituency is also set to benefit from our innovative Fibre in Water project, which will trial the use of water mains to deploy digital infrastructure.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[904148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support the growth of artificial intelligence technology companies of strategic importance to the UK.

Michelle Donelan:

The strategic importance of AI is highlighted in our Science and Technology Framework published last week. The Government has invested more than £2.3 billion in AI since 2014. Our National AI Strategy sets out how we will grow the AI ecosystem, providing skills by funding more PhD and Masters courses, targeted sector stimulus including £110m for AI technology missions, and our upcoming White Paper will outline a pro-innovation regulatory regime for AI.

■ Innovation and Research: Employment

Alan Brown:

[\[904142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the Government's 2022 Research and innovation workforce survey report.

George Freeman:

On 2 March the Government published the results of the first sector wide UK Research and Innovation workforce survey. The UK Science and Technology Framework outlines the Government's strategic vision and actions for Talent and Skills. This report will support the Government's work to make the UK the best place in the world to work in research and innovation. It will address evidence gaps related to skills, sectoral and geographical mobility and diversity and inclusion. The publication of the report is a key milestone in delivering the Government's R&D People and Culture Strategy and will help us to create an attractive, inclusive and diverse working environment for top talent in research and innovation.

■ T-levels

Layla Moran:

[\[161399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many specialist spaces she expects to be constructed for T Level students with the £50 million funding allocated in the Science and Technology Framework.

George Freeman:

On 6 March, the Government announced measures worth around £500 million to support delivery of the science and technology Framework. The Framework set out the UK's ambition for science and technology skills and talent to 2030, which included widening participation at higher technical levels.

Separately, the Department for Education has awarded nearly £200 million to T Level course providers between 2020 and 2023, almost £100 million through the Specialist Equipment Allocation, and at least a further £80 million for Wave 4 T Levels in March 2023. Further capital projects will be announced in the summer to support delivery from 2024.

TRANSPORT

■ Cycling and Walking

Gill Furniss:

[\[162531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it remains his Department's policy to have targets on (a) half of all journeys being walked or cycled by 2030, (b) 55 per cent of primary school children walking to school by 2025 and (c) walking or cycling becoming the natural choice for shorter journeys by 2040.

Jesse Norman:

The Government's ambitions for walking and cycling up to 2025 and 2030 are outlined in the second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) which was published in July 2022. The Strategy complements the Government's Gear Change plan, which was published in July 2020.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance

Gill Furniss:

[\[162530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his Written Statement entitled Transport Update published on 9 March, what assessment his Department has made on the potential impact of cuts to active travel funding on the Government's target for half of journeys to be walked or cycled by 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The total amount of funding needed to achieve the Government's target for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030 depends on a wide range of factors. Since the first-ever statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS1) in 2017, the Government has made a great deal of progress. Over the course of this Parliament, the Department expects over £3 billion to be invested in delivering safe and accessible walking and cycling infrastructure and providing training that gives people the skills and confidence to walk and cycle more as part of their everyday journeys.

An assessment of the extent to which the Government is on track to meet the 2030 target will be made as part of the development of the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3) in due course.

■ Great British Railways

Rachael Maskell: [\[162516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what responsibilities Great British Railways will have for ensuring train reliability; and what steps his Department will take to provide oversight of this responsibility.

Huw Merriman:

The Secretary of State set out his vision for rail last month, including the creation of Great British Railways (GBR) as the guiding mind to coordinate the railways and end fragmentation. New Passenger Service Contracts, including strong performance and revenue incentives, will ensure operators compete to deliver high-quality, punctual services.

Ministers will have strong levers to hold GBR to account, including the ability to issue directions and to licence GBR. As the independent economic and safety regulator for Britain's railways, the Office of Rail and Road will monitor and enforce compliance with GBR's licence.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Michael Fabricant: [\[162464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 9 March on Transport Update, whether the construction of HS2 between Birmingham and the point where it joins the West Coast Main Line near Handsacre will be affected by the construction rephase.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is continuing to work through the implications of the funding settlement with HS2 Ltd and further details will be confirmed formally shortly.

Christopher Pincher: [\[162503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of plans by HS2 Ltd to put back the development of Phase 1 of the route on communities where preparatory work has begun.

Huw Merriman:

The Government announced to Parliament its plans for rephasing some elements of the HS2 scheme on 9 March 2023. The plans were developed in consultation with HS2 Ltd and prioritise opening HS2 services between Old Oak Common in west London and Curzon Street in Birmingham.

My Department is continuing to work through the implications of the funding settlement with HS2 Ltd. If any further decisions are made, they will be announced in due course.

HS2 Ltd will of course continue to engage with affected residents in line with the principles set out in its Community Engagement strategy and will involve, inform, consult and respond to residents as necessary

■ Liverpool Port: Railways**Bill Esterson:** [\[162502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 9 March 2023 on Transport Update, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing rail access to the Port of Liverpool as an alternative to the deferred road through Rimrose Valley in the Borough of Sefton.

Huw Merriman:

We are rightly taking the proper time to review the rail enhancements portfolio and ensure schemes within the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline reflect the priorities of the Government whilst ensuring value for money to the taxpayer.

■ Railways: Compensation**Rachael Maskell:** [\[162514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the amount paid out by each rail operator as part of delay repay in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

Huw Merriman:

The compensation paid by train operating companies each year can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation/train-operating-companies-passengers-charter-compensation>.

■ Railways: Standards**Rachael Maskell:** [\[162515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the reliability of the train network.

Huw Merriman:

My Department is monitoring the performance of the railway very closely and is holding industry to account, including through regular high-level meetings with both Network Rail and representatives from the train operators.

Last month, the Transport Secretary set out his long-term vision for rail and plans to modernise the industry. This includes ambitions for a customer-focused, commercially-led industry and the creation of Great British Railways as a new guiding mind for the sector.

■ Transport: Research**Christine Jardine:** [\[904144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support scientific innovation in sustainable transport research.

Jesse Norman:

The Net Zero Innovation Board oversees the Government's portfolio of research supporting the transition to net zero and is chaired by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser. The Department for Transport is investing £377m over the current Spending Review period into research & development on decarbonisation.

TREASURY**■ Apprentices: Taxation****Emma Hardy:**[\[162268\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the amount allocated as public spending to the devolved nations from the UK Apprenticeship Levy in 2019-20 was £460 million; and what estimate he has made of the figures for 2020-21 to 2023-24 inclusive

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.

■ Coking Coal: Imports**Mark Jenkinson:**[\[160426\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much coking coal has been imported since 2018; and what the value was 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 via 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 from 2018 onwards appears in the table below.

Prior to 2022, the source of data for movements from the EU to the UK was Intrastat, this did not collect information on country of origin. The information on the country of dispatch has been given as an alternative.

IMPORTS OF COKING COAL '27011210' FROM EU MEMBER STATES BY COUNTRY OF DISPATCH, 2018-2021

Year	Country of Dispatch	Statistical Value (£)	Net mass (kg)
2018	Ireland	6,013,523	23,926,410
2019	Ireland	6,549,306	26,035,264
2020	Ireland	7,451,763	29,642,038
2020	Poland	10,279	17,354
2021	Ireland	6,099,655	24,252,668
2021	Poland	13,977	27,632
		26,138,503	103,901,366

Imports of Coking coal '27011210' by Country of Origin, 2018-2022

Year	Country of Origin	Statistical Value (£)	Net mass (kg)
2018	Australia	141,968,735	722,193,000
2018	Japan	55,241,352	176,000,000
2018	Russia	87,702,370	808,461,607
2018	United States	159,587,927	1,000,531,665
2019	Australia	105,663,842	507,541,670
2019	Japan	12,732,709	44,000,000
2019	Russia	80,538,472	783,977,229
2019	United States	121,656,062	827,660,496
2020	Australia	46,943,870	411,294,000
2020	Russia	51,751,791	792,601,202

IMPORTS OF COKING COAL '27011210' FROM EU MEMBER STATES BY COUNTRY OF DISPATCH,
2018-2021

2020	United States	91,348,179	918,790,529
2021	Australia	53,099,836	463,973,000
2021	Brazil	18,484,677	155,895,000
2021	Russia	57,298,064	557,418,494
2021	United States	102,420,594	796,150,720
2022	Unknown	10,340,349	26,014,912
2022	Australia	125,256,312	381,674,000
2022	Canada	13,898,412	38,500,000
2022	Kazakhstan	4,852	28,640
2022	Russia	14,639,058	80,642,000
2022	Sweden	17,356,927	157,638,000
2022	United States	303,375,807	999,093,710
		1,671,310,197	10,650,079,874
	Grand Total	1,697,448,700	10,753,981,240

*Data source: Overseas
Trade Statistics*

Note:

1. 'Unknown' country of origin has not been disclosed and is left blank on entry to the customs declaration data.
2. Sanctions against imports from Russia began in February 2022 following Russian military action in Ukraine.
3. Prior to 2022, the source of data for movements from the EU to the UK was Intrastat, this did not collect information on country of origin.

■ Energy Bills Discount Scheme: Agriculture

Carla Lockhart:

[\[160460\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Energy and Trade Intensive Industry scheme to include primary agricultural production.

James Murray:

As part of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS), we have taken a consistent approach to identifying the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for Energy and Trade Intensive Industries (ETII) component of the scheme. These thresholds have been set at sectors falling above the 80th percentile for energy intensity and 60th percentile for trade intensity, plus any sectors eligible for the existing energy compensation and exemption schemes. We have also published further information on the methodology which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-discount-scheme-factsheet/energy-bills-discount-scheme-energy-and-trade-intense-industries-assessment-methodology>

All other eligible businesses, except for those experiencing low energy costs, will automatically receive a unit discount on their bills of up to £19.61/MW for electricity, and £6.97/MW for gas.

We remain committed to supporting our farmers to produce high quality food and to increase the productivity, resilience, and sustainability of their businesses. That is why we have maintained farm budgets across this Parliament as promised, each year providing an average of £2.4 billion in England, £621m in Scotland, £340m in Wales, and £330m in Northern Ireland.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Standards

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish the average waiting times, including to assessment and outcome, of the Access to Work programme.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work official statistics are published annually and include how many approvals have been made. However, the publication does not include waiting times as the data on this is not of sufficient quality to meet the standard requirement for an official statistics publication.

■ Carer's Allowance: Earnings Rules

Cat Smith:

[\[161321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of raising the earnings limit for people receiving carers allowance to £200 a week.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer to question UIN [114688](#) given on 10 January 2023.

■ Cost of Living: Sickle Cell Diseases

Janet Daby:

[\[160407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including sickle cell patients in the support package for households to deal with the increase in living costs.

Tom Pursglove:

No one is excluded from the Government's cost of living support as a consequence of a health condition or disability. Those with needs arising from such a condition may be entitled to the full range of support depending on their circumstances, including access to an extra costs disability benefit such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The Government understands the pressures people, including disabled people, are facing with the cost of living, and has taken further, decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The Energy Price Guarantee is supporting millions of households with rising energy costs in addition to other cost of living support delivered last year, which includes:

- The £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme;
- A Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 to six million people in recognition of the extra costs they face, including with energy costs;
- Up to £650 in Cost of Living Payments for the eight million households in receipt of a means-tested benefit; and
- A one-off payment of £300 through, and as an addition to, the Winter Fuel Payment from November to pensioner households.

For those who require additional support, the current Household Support Fund, running in England from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, is providing £421 million of funding. The devolved administrations have been allocated £79 million through the Barnett formula.

The Household Support Fund will continue until March 2024. This year long extension allows local authorities in England to continue to provide discretionary support to those most in need with the significantly rising cost of living. The guidance

for local authorities for this next iteration has now been published and can be found here: [1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024-household-support-fund-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england). The devolved administrations will receive consequential funding as usual to spend at their discretion.

In April, we are uprating benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions, the benefit cap levels are also increasing by the same amount.

In addition, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. This will be split into three payments of around £300 each across the 2023/24 financial year. A separate £300 payment will be made to pensioner households on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits, including PIP, will receive a £150 payment. Further to this, the Energy Price Guarantee will be extended from April 2023 until the end of March 2024, meaning a typical household bill will be around £3,000 per year in Great Britain.

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Appeals

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[162510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the average cost associated with overturning an ESA decision.

Tom Pursglove:

The average DWP cost of an ESA reconsideration and appeal is £202 and £377 respectively. This is the cost of processing a reconsideration or an appeal, irrespective of the outcome (i.e., whether the decision is overturned or not). The data held does not allow this information to be split.

The cost figures quoted are estimated DWP level 1 operating costs, including both direct delivery staff and non-staff costs. Non-staff costs are only those costs incurred in local cost centres, relating to direct delivery staff. The financial period covered by this information is 2021/22.

Staff expenditure includes the cost of Decision Makers and administrative staff, as well as DWP Presenting Officers for appeals. Presenting Officers attend some tribunals.

Please note that the data supplied is from the Departmental Activity Based Models. This data 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 standards. It should therefore be treated with caution. The Departmental Activity Based staffing models are a snapshot of how many people were identified as undertaking specified activities as assigned by line managers.

The data is frequently revised and changes to definitions/benefits/DWP structure effect comparisons over time. It should therefore be treated with caution and must be seen as an indication of cost, rather than the actual cost.

Figures quoted include both ESA WCA and Non-WCA costs (Work Capability Assessment).

The DWP cover the administration costs of an appeal. However, the department is unable to provide the total government spend on defending appeals.

This is because appeals are a joint process between the DWP and HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS). The DWP do not handle tribunals for appeals; the cost of handling appeal tribunals sits with HMCTS, and we do not hold their cost information. If this information was required, we would suggest that this element of your request be submitted to HMCTS.

Data Source: ABM

■ Local Housing Allowance: Hastings and Rye

Sally-Ann Hart:

[\[162327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the Local Housing Allowance to cover at least the cheapest third of rents in Hastings and Rye constituency.

Mims Davies:

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum amount of housing support for those renting in the private rented sector. LHA is not intended to meet all rents in all areas.

When considering LHA, the Government recognises the importance of providing support for the most vulnerable in society whilst balancing fairness to the taxpayer.

LHA rates are being maintained at their current levels for 2023/24.

The 30th percentile of local rents calculated for the Sussex East Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) (which covers Hastings and Rye) for the period October 2021 to September 2022 are:

30th percentile rental data

SAR	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED
£82.10	£132.33	£172.60	£218.63	£276.16

The 30th percentile presents the closest available data to the lowest third of rents.

Current LHA rates for Sussex East BRMA

SAR	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED
£74.79	£115.07	£149.59	£195.62	£230.14

NB - The figures in the tables represent weekly amounts

The difference in the tables would not always be received in full in a benefit award calculation due to varying household circumstances such as income levels.

■ State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance Contributions

Stephen Farry:

[160459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) extending the transitional arrangements for buying missing national insurance contributions beyond 5 April 2023 and (b) increasing staffing for the relevant HMRC and Pension Centre Helplines.

Laura Trott:

I am pleased to confirm that a Written Ministerial Statement ([Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)) was made on 7 March 2023 by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury confirming that the deadline for contributions has been extended to 31 July. This is to ensure customers do not miss out on the opportunity to make voluntary NICs for the period between 5 April 2006 to the end of the 2016/17 tax year. All voluntary NICs payments for this period will now be accepted at the existing 2022/23 rates until the 31 July 2023. This extension allows HMRC and DWP the time to process enquiries and payments to ensure people's State Pension eligibility can be maximised.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Underpayments

Jonathan Ashworth:

[162506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people his Department estimates will be eligible for payments due to an underpayment of the State Pension as of 10 March 2023; and what the average underpayment is.

Laura Trott:

The latest published data on LEAP exercise to correct underpayments of the State Pension is in the DWP annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022 and LEAP MI publications.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-pension-underpayments-progress-on-cases-reviewed-to-31-october-2022/state-pension-underpayments-progress-on-cases-reviewed-to-31-october-2022>

The information requested as of 10 March 2023 is not readily available. After the budget we will publish updated MI data for the LEAP exercise. We will publish further information in the 2022/23 DWP Annual Report and Accounts in the summer.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[162507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to identified cases of State Pension underpayment, what is the total amount to be repaid outstanding as of 10 March 2023.

Laura Trott:

The latest published data on the LEAP exercise to correct underpayments of the State Pension is in the DWP annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>:

The information requested for the total amount to be repaid outstanding as of 10 March 2023 is not readily available. In the summer we will publish the updated DWP annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023 which will include updated estimates.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[162508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, as of 10 March 2023, how many people identified as having been underpaid with respect to their State Pension have died before repayments were made.

Laura Trott:

The information requested is not available.

The latest published data on LEAP exercise to correct underpayments of the State Pension is in the DWP annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022 publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022> :

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Sarah Olney:

[161373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many individuals have applied for support with mortgage interest payments and are waiting for a decision.

Mims Davies:

We do not record the information requested because eligible benefit claimants are offered a loan when they become eligible for Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) which they can choose to accept.

■ Work Capability Assessment

Vicky Foxcroft:

[161338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many special payments were considered by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many requests for special payments were received by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many special payments were proactively considered by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many special payments were made by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many special payments were made after being requested by individuals or their advocates on decisions of (a) Personal Independence Payment, (b) Employment Support Allowance's work capability assessments and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessments in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many special payments were made after being proactively considered by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value of special payments made in relating to the award of an (a) Personal Independence Payment, (b) Employment and Support Allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[161345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of special payments that were made after being proactively considered by his Department for decisions relating to the award of a (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment

and support allowance work capability assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessment in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[161346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the value was of special payments made after being considered by his Department in relation to decisions of (a) Personal Independence Payment, (b) Employment Support Allowance's Work Capability Assessment and (c) Universal Credit work capability assessments in the latest 12 month period for which data is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The department aims to provide a good level of service to our customers, which includes robust decision making. Whilst we strive to provide the best possible service to our customers, we don't always get it right and, when this happens, the Special Payments scheme is there to acknowledge any impacts caused as a result of DWP maladministration. If a benefit decision is over-turned, it does not mean that the original decision was caused by maladministration.

In 2021-22, we authorised 9,585 ex-gratia payments (against our customer base of 22 million) totalling £1.20 million for maladministration. We do not hold a breakdown by benefit type for special payments issued.

The department publishes special payment data annually in their DWP Annual Report and Accounts on GOV.UK. See page 86 of the following link: [DWP annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108122/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022-1.pdf). Special Payment data for 2022/23 will be available later in the year.

The DWP's Policy and Guiding Principles guide: '*Financial Redress for Maladministration*' explains each category of special payment (para 5 to 5.14). The guide can be found on: [Compensation for poor service: staff guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/108122/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022-1.pdf).

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ 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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

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.

The information requested is publicly available and can be accessed here: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-and-personal-medical-services/31-december-2022.Notes>. Data includes estimates

for practices that did not provide fully valid staff records. In December 2022, 2.1% of fully qualified GP FTE was estimated where practices had not provided fully valid staff records. Before July 2021, data was only available quarterly for the following months: March, June, September and December. Full-time equivalent (FTE) refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. 1 would indicate they work a full set of hours (37.5), 0.5 that they worked half time. TARGET DATE 09/02/2023. Figures shown do not include staff working in prisons, army bases, educational establishments, specialist care centres including drug rehabilitation centres, walk-in centres and other alternative settings outside of traditional general practice such as urgent treatment centres and minor injury units. Figures include GP partners, salaried GPs, GP retainers and GP regular locums.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **New Loan Guarantees to Support Ukraine**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Europe) (Leo Docherty): [\[HCWS635\]](#)

Today, I have laid a Departmental Minute which describes a new liability the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are undertaking to support the economic stability of Ukraine following Russia's invasion in February 2022.

It is normal practice, when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a Departmental Minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the statement, except in cases of special urgency.

This Departmental Minute sets out details of a new liability undertaken by the FCDO. The liability is a further guarantee to support \$500m of additional lending by the World Bank to the Government of Ukraine. This guarantee has an expected maximum exposure of up to £676m (once interest payments are accounted for). The guarantees will be denominated in USD. I have separately notified the Chairs of the Public Accounts Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee and International Development Committee.

FCDO will guarantee both principal and interest repayments from Ukraine to the World Bank. A UK pay-out would be triggered if the Government of Ukraine miss a repayment by 180 days.

The exact length of the liabilities is linked to the terms of the agreed financing between the World Bank, and the Government of Ukraine. The World Bank's lending is expected to have a maturity of 29 years and a 7-year grace period during which only interest payments are due.

The war has placed huge pressures on Ukraine's economy, with a large and unmet fiscal deficit emerging across 2023. The international finance community, including development banks like the World Bank, have stepped in and are playing a key role in providing rapid and reliable financial support at a critical time. This guarantee will help the Government pay for essential services like salaries and social services and contribute toward Ukraine's economic stability.

Ukraine is currently undertaking an IMF Programme known as a [Programme Monitoring with Board Involvement](#). We continue to engage with the IMF and the Government of Ukraine to assess Ukraine's willingness and ability to borrow on the terms associated with World Bank lending. We understand that Ukraine will only make use of the UK guarantee if the lending is consistent with advice on debt sustainability and any limits agreed with the IMF.

HM Treasury has approved this guarantee. It is also normal practice that any contingent liabilities should not be incurred until 14 sitting days after Parliament has been notified of the Government's intention to incur a contingent liability. If any member of the House has questions or objections, do get in touch.

A copy of the Departmental Minute has been placed in the House Library.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Publication of the Health and Disability White Paper

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mel Stride): [\[HCWS636\]](#)

I would like to update Hon and Rt Hon Members on the publication later today of *Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper*.

This White Paper is a significant milestone demonstrating this Government's commitment to ensuring disabled people and people with health conditions can lead independent lives and fulfil their potential. It sets out an ambitious policy reform package that will transform the health and disability benefits system and help disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. This will help to deliver the Prime Minister's priority of growing the economy, creating better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country.

We set out our case for reform in *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, published in July 2021. During the consultation, we heard from more than 4,500 people and organisations on which proposals we should take forward. From the responses, we know many disabled people want to work and could work, with the right support. Our White Paper responds to those views.

We are proud of our record on disability employment and support. Last year, we surpassed our 2017 manifesto goal to see one million more disabled people in work – delivering our manifesto commitment five years earlier than expected. Our ambition remains to close the disability employment gap, and I will set a new disability employment goal.

The measures set out in this White Paper will build upon our achievements, unlock new opportunities, and support people most in need. With low unemployment and more than a million vacancies, we are focused on ensuring more people are supported into the workforce so that they can seize the opportunities of work and employers can access the skills they need to grow their businesses.

We will deliver action in these areas in three ways:

First, the Government will transform the future benefits system so it focuses on what people can do, rather than on what they cannot, including removing the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). In our new system, there will be no need to be found to have limited capability for work, or limited capability for work or work-related activity, to receive additional income-related support for a disability or health condition. We will introduce a new Universal Credit health element that people receiving both Personal Independence

Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit will be entitled to, which will enable people to try work without the fear of losing their benefits. We will also introduce a new personalised approach to employment support and engagement, with the aim of helping people to reach their potential and live a more independent life. We will give people confidence that they will receive support, for as long as it is needed, regardless of whether they are working.

Second, we will invest in our employment offer to help more disabled people and people with health conditions start, stay and succeed in work and contribute to a growing economy. Our research shows that 20% of people with limited capability for work-related activity (LCWRA) on Universal Credit, or who are in the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Support Group, would like to work at some point in the future. We are therefore investing in additional work coach time and tailored support to help disabled people to get the support they need to start work. We will continue to work with employers and the occupational health sector to help more people remain in work and reduce health-related job loss.

Third, we will ensure that people can access the right support at the right time and have a better overall experience when applying for and receiving health and disability benefits. We are doing this by testing new initiatives to make it easier to apply for and receive health and disability benefits. This includes extending the Enhanced Support Service, which offers support for those who find it hardest to navigate the benefits system. We are also testing a Severe Disability Group which means people with the most severe health conditions can benefit from a simplified process without needing to complete a detailed application form or go through an assessment.

Our benefit reform proposals will take time to implement. They will require primary legislation, which we would aim to take forward in the next Parliament. These reforms would then be rolled out, for new claims only, on a staged, geographical basis from no earlier than 2026/27. We would expect the new claims roll-out to be completed within three years (so by 2029 at the earliest), when we would then begin to move the existing caseload on to the new system.

Throughout and beyond the work of this White Paper, we will continue to listen to, and work with, disabled people, organisations, charities, and experts, to ensure the voices of disabled people remain at the heart of delivering action.

I am certain that our White Paper reforms will support more people to reach their full potential and reap the health and wellbeing advantages of work.