



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:36 P.M., 17 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

■ Department for Business and Trade: Incentives

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[162242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how much her Department spent on end of year bonus payments for members of staff involved in export support roles in 2021-22.

Nigel Huddleston:

We have interpreted your question to mean end of year performance bonuses paid to those employees whose roles directly support on export activity.

Within the former Department for International Trade, the Director General for Exports and Trade area has a primary role of supporting on exports. In the year 2021 – 2022 the Director General for Exports and Trade Group paid out at total of £250,115 to 195 people for end of year performance bonuses.

■ Trade Agreements: Negotiations

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[162244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what her planned timetable is for negotiating trade agreements with (a) India, (b) Canada and (c) Mexico.

Nigel Huddleston:

We have an ambitious programme of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations to help our nation become a truly Global Britain.

We have completed seven rounds of negotiations with India, four rounds of negotiations with Canada, and two rounds of negotiations with Mexico.

We look forward to concluding negotiations at the earliest opportunity, but it is the substance of trade deals that is important, not the timing.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Legal Opinion

Angela Rayner: [\[165342\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the average cost per hour was of legal advice to his Department over the last 12 months.

Jeremy Quin:

Cabinet Office predominantly receives legal advice in-house from the Government Legal Department, which charges for its work on various bases, including fixed fee arrangements and hourly charging. However, there are special cases where we need

to seek advice from external legal firms and counsel; in these circumstances, the Cabinet Office ensures the costs are competitive and value for money is achieved by using competed frameworks for external firms and the Attorney General's panel of counsel.

Since much of the advice is not charged for on an hourly basis, the department cannot calculate the average hourly cost of legal advice.

■ **Cost of Living Payments: Publicity**

Sarah Olney:

[161375]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department has spent on promotional materials for cost of living support payments.

Alex Burghart:

The promotion of cost of living payments was funded by both the Department of Work and Pensions and Cabinet Office at different times in the 2022/23 Financial Year.

Cabinet Office publishes expenditure on a rolling monthly basis on gov.uk as part of routine government transparency arrangements. This can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-spend-data>.

The Department for Work and Pensions publishes details of all departmental spending over £25,000 on a monthly basis. This can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwp-payments-over-25-000>.

■ **Fraud**

Angela Rayner:

[165264]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 92227 on Fraud, what recent progress the Public Sector Fraud Authority has made on delivering £180m of identified fraud benefits within its first year.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office's Public Sector Fraud Authority is on track to deliver in excess of £180m of identified fraud benefits in its first year. The final figure will be audited by GIAA in the Summer and announced shortly after.

■ **Government Consulting Hub: Staff**

Angela Rayner:

[165263]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many officials work in the Government Consulting Hub; and at what band those officials are working as of 14 March 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Rt Honourable Lady to my answer of 10 February, PQ 138358, in which, inter alia, I set out that the Government Consulting Hub was closed in January 2023.

■ Legal Opinion: Contracts**Fleur Anderson:** [\[165491\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department's Accounting Officer was consulted on the decision to award legal services contract reference C2298 to Peters & Peters.

Jeremy Quin:

As set out by Alex Chisholm, the Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer of the Cabinet Office at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee meeting on 26 January 2023, the contract award has followed the proper procurement process.

■ Ministers: Conduct**Angela Rayner:** [\[162185\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the process is for a member of staff making a formal bullying complaint about a Minister under the Ministerial Code.

Alex Burghart:

I refer the Rt. Hon Member to the answer given in PQ24573 on 24 June 2022

■ Ministers: Legal Opinion**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[165349\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many ministers have had legal costs relating to inquiries by the House of Commons Privileges Committee funded from the public purse since 2010.

Jeremy Quin:

Until the current matter referred to the Privileges Committee on 21 April 2022, since 2010, no Ministers have been the subject of an inquiry by either the Committee of Privileges or the Committee on Standards and Privileges relating to a matter of privilege and their conduct as a minister.

There is an established precedent across multiple administrations that former Ministers may be supported with legal representation after they have left office when matters relate to their time and conduct as a Minister.

■ Prime Minister: Visits Abroad**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[163991\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many official trips the Prime Minister has taken by (a) train, (b) plane and (c) helicopter since 25 October 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 24 February 2023, PQ 143902. The location of official Prime Ministerial visits is published each quarter on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Charities: Cost of Living****Damian Green:**[\[161210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help support charities with the cost of living.

Stuart Andrew:

As announced in the recent Spring Budget, the government will provide over £100 million of support for charities and community organisations in England. This will be targeted towards those organisations most at risk, due to increased demand from vulnerable groups and higher delivery costs, as well as providing investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs.

Charities will also continue to receive support for their energy bills until March 2024 under the government's current Energy Bill Relief Scheme and the future Energy Bills Discount Scheme.

■ Leisure and Swimming Pools: Finance**Catherine West:**[\[161359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on funding for swimming pools and leisure centres.

Catherine West:[\[161360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with local authorities on the impact of (a) funding and (b) rises in costs on trends in the levels of closure of local swimming pools.

Stuart Andrew:

We recognise the importance of ensuring public access to swimming pools, as swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy. The responsibility of providing this access lies at Local Authority level, and the Government continues to encourage Local Authorities to support swimming facilities.

We appreciate the impact rising energy prices are having on organisations of all sizes, including on operators of swimming pools. At the Budget, we announced a dedicated £63 million support package for swimming pools. This is targeted at both addressing cost pressures facing public swimming pool providers and providing investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs and make facilities sustainable in the long-term.

This follows the £18 billion Energy Bill Relief Scheme provided since September last year. This scheme has now been superseded with the Energy Bills Discount Scheme under which swimming pools will continue to receive discounts on their gas and electricity bills until March 2024.

■ Swimming Pools

Catherine West:

[\[161358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to undertaken an audit of the condition of pool facilities in England.

Stuart Andrew:

We recognise the importance of ensuring public access to swimming pools, as swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy. The responsibility of providing this access lies at Local Authority level, and the Government continues to encourage Local Authorities to support swimming facilities.

We appreciate the impact rising energy prices are having on organisations of all sizes, including on operators of swimming pools. At the Budget, we announced a dedicated £63 million support package for swimming pools. This is targeted at both addressing cost pressures facing public swimming pool providers and providing investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs and make facilities sustainable in the long-term.

This follows the £18 billion Energy Bill Relief Scheme provided since September last year. This scheme has now been superseded with the Energy Bills Discount Scheme under which swimming pools will continue to receive discounts on their gas and electricity bills until March 2024.

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[162469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2023 to Question 122055 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy principals with confirmation of their eligibility for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme made before the end of Operation PITTING remain in Afghanistan as of 10 March 2023.

James Heapey:

As of 10 March 2023, of those approved for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme before the end of Op PITTING, we believe five remain in Afghanistan. However, it is not possible to definitively know whether these five individuals do remain in Afghanistan, as they may have left the country through another route. As noted in your answer on 12 January 2023, we continue to actively support their relocations to the UK.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[163853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many individuals have been relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme in each month since December 2022.

James Heappey:

The number of individuals relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme since December 2022 can be found in the table below:

MONTH	TOTAL ARAP RELOCATIONS TO THE UK
December	1
January	31
February	24

These relocation figures include eligible principals, their dependants who are eligible by default and additional family members (AFM) who qualify to be relocated to the UK under ARAP.

Dan Jarvis:[\[163854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he is taking steps to reduce the time taken to confirm the eligibility of applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Resettlement Policy scheme.

James Heappey:

As referenced in my answer of 10 March 2023, we are now processing and issuing decisions on more applications per month than we are receiving. In the past week alone, we have processed over 2,000 applications - while in February 2023 we issued more eligibility decisions than in any other month previously.

Furthermore, we are aiming to process all outstanding applications by August 2023.

■ Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence: Dental Services**Dr Caroline Johnson:**[\[165387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many whole-time equivalent dentists are employed by (a) his Department, (b) the armed forces, (c) the Royal Air Force, (d) the British Army and (e) the Royal Navy.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The table below provides the numbers of Dental Officers in the UK Armed Forces, by Service, as at 1 October 2022:

TABLE 1. TRAINED/TRADE TRAINED REGULAR AND TRAINED FR20 RESERVE DENTAL OFFICERS IN THE UK ARMED FORCES, BY SERVICE, AS AT 1 OCTOBER 2022

	Total Royal Army Royal			
	Navy		Air Force	
Total	180	40	100	40

TABLE 1. TRAINED/TRADE TRAINED REGULAR AND TRAINED FR20 RESERVE DENTAL OFFICERS IN THE UK ARMED FORCES, BY SERVICE, AS AT 1 OCTOBER 2022

Regular/Full-Time	140	40	70	30
FR20/Part-Time	40	-	30	10

The above figures are for uniformed military personnel only and have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes; numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias. It is not possible to provide data for Volunteer Reserves in terms of whole-time equivalency.

The table below provides the numbers of Ministry of Defence Civilian Dental Practitioners by Top Level Budget Holder (TLB) and Headcount and Full Time Equivalence (FTE) as at 1 October 2022:

TABLE 2: MOD CIVILIAN DENTAL PRACTITIONERS BY TLB AND HEADCOUNT AND FTE

01 October 2022

TLB	Headcount	FT E
UK Strat Com	102	86

■ Armed Forces: Dental Services

Dr Caroline Johnson: [\[165389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military personnel are waiting for dental treatment as of 14 March 2023.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As at 1 March 2023 (latest data available) 22,138 UK Armed Forces personnel were categorised as NATO Category 2 or 3; meaning that they require either preventative or interventive treatment to achieve optimal dental fitness.

NATO Category 2 patients are deployable as they only require minor interventive treatment or treatment aimed at preventing disease. NATO Category 3 patients require treatment for conditions which are likely to result in issues within a year if left untreated. These are the priority for treatment.

■ Invicta Park Barracks

John Healey: [\[163717\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 March 2023 to Question 155024.

Attachments:

1. Redford Barracks [UIN 155024.docx]

■ Pirbright Camp

John Healey: [\[165209\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[165211\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[165213\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[165215\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[165217\]](#)

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

John Healey: [\[165219\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

Alexander Barracks, Pirbright Nr Guildford is 75.448 hectares in size.

Elizabeth Barracks, Pirbright Nr Guildford is 18.380 hectares in size.

Gibraltar Barracks is 87.311 hectares in size.

Hammersley Barracks is 4.890 hectares in size.

Lille Barracks is 14.136 hectares in size.

Mons Barracks is 18.742 hectares in size.

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

■ RAF Cosford**Luke Pollard:** [\[165409\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[165411\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[165413\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[165415\]](#)

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

Luke Pollard: [\[165417\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

RAF Cosford is 272.115 hectares in size.

RAF Brize Norton is 540.259 hectares in size.

MOD St Athan is 91.489 hectares in size.

Mona Airfield is 68.132 hectares in size.

RAF Valley is 392.082 hectares in size.

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

■ Sir John Moore Barracks**John Healey:** [\[165207\]](#)

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

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 March 2023 to Question 155024.

Attachments:

1. Redford Barracks [UIN 155024.docx]

■ Trident Submarines: Finance

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[165231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much of the £5 billion funding for his Department announced on 13 March 2023 will be allocated to the Dreadnought programme.

Alex Chalk:

Of the £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister, £3 billion in additional funding will be invested across the defence nuclear enterprise.

The Department is currently working through the allocation of this funding, but the existing funding mechanism for Dreadnought is already well established.

Dave Doogan:

[\[165425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the amount that will be spent on Trident renewal in financial years 2023-40.

Dave Doogan:

[\[165426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding his Department will provide for the renewal of Trident.

Alex Chalk:

The Dreadnought Class submarine build programme remains on track to deliver within the estimated budget, announced in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, of £31 billion with an additional £10 billion contingency. It is too early to provide cost estimates for the Replacement Warhead programme as much will depend on the eventual design requirements, and work is underway to agree cost estimates and funding arrangements.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Neurodiversity

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[162175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to reduce the drop out rate of neuro-divergent apprentices.

Robert Halfon:

Apprenticeships offer great opportunities for people of all backgrounds to get the skills that they need to begin, or progress in, a rewarding career. The department recognise that apprenticeship achievement brings huge advantages in terms of future earnings and employment prospects, and we are committed to supporting more learners who have declared a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) to start and achieve apprenticeships.

The department is working with the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network to explore the barriers that disabled apprentices face in accessing and achieving

apprenticeships. The Network published its latest annual report in February 2023, which contains useful information for employers to help them better support apprentices with LDD and can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1135471/ADCN_Annual_Report_2022_to_2023.pdf.

In addition, our Disabled Apprentice Network, in partnership with Disability Rights UK, provides valuable insight and evidence on how to attract and retain people with disabilities into apprenticeships. The Network's latest annual report considers what works well for disabled apprentices based on their experiences and will help government, employers and training providers to improve how apprenticeships are delivered. The department has also improved its Find an Apprenticeship service, to allow people to identify Disability Confident Employers offering opportunities.

In addition, the department continue to pay employers and providers £1,000 when they take on apprentices under 25 years old with an education, health and care plan, and provide monthly financial support to providers to help them make reasonable adjustments for eligible apprentices with LDD.

The department is also taking a broader range of actions to drive up apprenticeship quality and achievements for all apprentices, including neuro-divergent apprentices.

We are supporting employers through our Employer Quality Roadmap which provides guidance on what employers need to be doing at each stage of the apprenticeship, and Ofsted will be fully inspecting all apprenticeship providers by 2025. A new exit feedback tool has also been launched for apprentices who have withdrawn, alongside a new feedback tool for existing apprentices to provide feedback on their training provider. The department will use this feedback to inform further improvements.

■ Babies: Health Services

Wera Hobhouse:

[161376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much Start for Life funding her Department budgeted for distribution to participating local authorities in the 2022-23 financial year; and how much and what proportion of that funding was received by those local authorities as of 31 January 2023.

Claire Coutinho:

The department budgeted the following to spend on grants for the 75 local authorities on the Family Hubs Start for Life Programme in 2022/23:

- Family Hubs Transformation Fund Grant: £17,480,000 (Revenue and Capital)
- Family Hubs Parenting Support Grant: £9,800,000
- Home Learning Environment Grant: £12,900,000

The remainder of the grants paid to local authorities for the Family Hubs Start for Life Programme in 2022-23 are grants from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). These grants cover perinatal mental health, including parent and infant

relationships, infant feeding, parent and carer panels, Start for Life publishing, and workforce trials.

As of 31 January 2023, all local authorities had been paid their first of two grants for 2022/23. The Department have paid the following in grants to local authorities up to and including 31 January 2023:

- Family Hubs Transformation Fund Grant: £8,740,000(Revenue and Capital)
- Family Hubs Parenting Support Grant: £4,873,851
- Home Learning Environment Grant: £6,403,518

Local authorities will receive their second and final grant payment for 2022/23 in March 2023, with the majority receiving this by 13 March 2023.

■ Children: Swimming

Catherine West:

[\[161361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary comprehensive schools in England have provided swimming classes to students as part of the 2022-23 curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

Swimming and water safety are compulsory elements of the PE and Sport National Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2.

The Department does not collect data on how many primary or secondary schools provide swimming lessons. All schools in receipt of the primary PE and Sport premium are required to publish the percentage of their Year 6 pupils who met each of the three swimming and water safety National Curriculum expectations.

■ Educational Institutions: Ventilation

Seema Malhotra:

[\[163871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential need for HEPA filters in early years educational settings.

Nick Gibb:

Good ventilation is associated with improved alertness and concentration. Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can also help remove air that contains virus particles and other airborne contaminants, and is important in reducing the spread of airborne infections, including COVID-19 and flu.

Over the last two years, the Department has provided CO2 monitors to every state funded school and childcare provider, including early years providers, in England to help identify poorly ventilated spaces across their estates and help manage the need for ventilation and thermal comfort. Feedback from these suggests that, in most schools and childcare providers, existing ventilation measures are sufficient.

For the very few schools and childcare providers where maintaining good ventilation is not possible, the Department has supplied High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA)

air cleaning units. All state funded early years providers were eligible, including private, voluntary and independent providers, and childminders who work together in groups of four or more and are registered as operating childcare on domestic premises. All eligible applications received during the previous roll out have been fulfilled and the Department is currently working through this year's applications. Air cleaning units are not a substitute for ventilation and are not necessary in spaces that are adequately ventilated.

This approach is in keeping with SAGE's Environmental Modelling Group advice. This states that air cleaning devices, including HEPA Filtration and ultraviolet technology have limited benefit in spaces that are already adequately ventilated and should only be considered where the ventilation is inadequate and cannot be easily improved.

Both the Health and Safety Executive and the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers use a CO2 threshold of 1500ppm to indicate poor ventilation. This is the threshold the Department has used as criteria for the supply of air cleaning units.

The Department has published guidance in the Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), which provides guidelines on indoor and outdoor air quality in new and refurbished schools, this also provides helpful guidance to early years providers:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-bulletin-101-ventilation-for-school-buildings>. BB101 guidance promotes best practice in controlling pollutants and setting maximum standards for levels of pollutants indoors.

■ Home Economics: Secondary Education

Lee Anderson:

[162294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making it compulsory for home economics to be taught to key stage 4 students.

Nick Gibb:

Learning how to cook is an important life skill for pupils. To facilitate this for Key Stage 4 pupils, the Department introduced a food preparation and nutrition GCSE in 2016 which requires pupils to understand and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating when preparing and cooking food. As part of the 2014 design and technology curriculum, the Department introduced a strand called 'cooking and nutrition', which is compulsory for pupils aged 5 to 14. Through this strand, children are taught how to cook with an emphasis on savoury dishes, and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition.

■ National Tutoring Programme

Stephen Morgan:

[162270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to publish data on the number of Pupil Premium pupils taking part in the National Tutoring Programme in the 2022-23 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

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

The Department collects data from schools via the termly school census on the amount of tutoring they have provided for each pupil. This data includes uptake by pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). The Department uses FSM eligibility as a proxy for Pupil Premium, as Pupil Premium is not captured on the school census.

This data has been made available on GOV.UK at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>.

The Department will publish further information on Thursday 20 April 2023. This will include an update to the early 2022/23 academic year statistics and include a breakdown by FSM.

The Department will publish data from the spring and summer term school censuses for the 2022/23 academic year in due course.

■ Schools: Electronic Cigarettes

Esther McVey:

[161287]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of the accessibility of vapes in schools.

Esther McVey:

[161288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has issued guidance to schools on reducing the use of e-cigarettes in schools.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy that sets out what is expected of all pupils, including what items are banned from school premises.

Schools have the autonomy to decide which items should be banned from their premises, and these can include e-cigarettes or vapes. School staff can search pupils for banned items as outlined in the Department's Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>.

The relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance states that, in both primary and secondary school, pupils should be taught the facts concerning legal and

illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use, and drug-taking.

To support schools to deliver this content effectively, the Department has published a suite of teacher training modules, including one on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, which makes specific reference to e-cigarettes and vaping.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Fleur Anderson:

[\[161434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to increase the number of mental health counsellors working in schools.

Claire Coutinho:

The mental health of children is a priority for this government. We know schools can support pupil mental health in a variety of ways, particularly by providing safe, calm and supportive environments that promote good mental wellbeing and help prevent the onset of mental illness.

Schools are not specialist mental health providers, but they can play an important role in identifying and responding to emerging or existing mental health issues. This may include providing targeted pastoral support, or ensuring referrals are made to external specialist support.

It is important for schools to have the freedom to decide what support to offer to pupils based on their particular needs, drawing on an evidence base of effective practice. This support can include counselling, which can be an effective part of a whole school approach. However, counselling is not suitable for all needs and many pupils also benefit from other in-school support, including from trained pastoral staff and educational psychologists.

To support the effective use of training and guidance on mental health in schools, the department is funding all schools and colleges in England to train senior mental health leads who can put in place whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. More than 11,700 schools and colleges have now received a senior mental health lead training grant, including over half of the eligible schools/colleges and more than six in ten state-funded secondary schools. This is backed by £10 million in the 2022/23 financial year. Further information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/senior-mental-health-lead-training>.

The department has also published a blueprint for schools on counselling services. This provides schools with practical, evidence-based advice, informed by schools and counselling experts, on how to deliver high quality school-based counselling.

To expand access to early mental health support, the Government is also increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges to 400 by 2023, covering around 35% of pupils in England. Over 500 MHSTs are planned to be up and running by 2024. Further information is available here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/>.

■ Schools: Sexual Offences

Munira Wilson:

[\[162301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 132 of the Ofsted school inspection handbook, what assessment she has made of the impact of the introduction in 2021 of a requirement that schools have appropriate policies in place on sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence on the prevalence of those issues in schools.

Munira Wilson:

[\[162302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 132 of the Ofsted school inspection handbook, how many schools have been found by Ofsted not to have complied with the requirement to have appropriate policies in place on sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence, since that requirement was introduced into the handbook in 2021.

Nick Gibb:

This is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Schools: Vocational Guidance

Fleur Anderson:

[\[161433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to increase the number of professional careers advisers in school and colleges.

Nick Gibb:

Secondary schools and colleges have a legal duty to secure independent careers guidance for all 12 to 18 year olds and to those up to the age of 25 with an education, health and care plan.

Secondary schools and colleges should adopt the Government's careers framework, the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, to develop and improve their careers programmes. The benchmarks describe eight aspects of high quality careers guidance based on international evidence.

Benchmark 8 focuses on personal guidance. It sets out that every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser trained to an appropriate level. These interviews should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. By setting this clear expectation in the Department's statutory guidance for careers, the Department is increasing the demand from secondary schools and colleges for qualified careers advisers. The Department's careers guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools>.

There continues to be an increase in the number of young people accessing personal guidance with a qualified careers adviser. In 2021/22, 85% of schools reported that

most pupils (over 76%) had an interview with a qualified careers adviser by the end of Year 11. This is up from 80% the previous year. 66% of schools provided two or more interviews with a qualified careers adviser by the end of Year 13, up from 58% the previous year.

The Department is investing £18.5 million in 2022/23 to support the full rollout of Careers Hubs across England. 90% of secondary schools and colleges are now part of a Careers Hub, a tried and tested model for partnership and collaboration in careers education that is proven to accelerate progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks. In 2021/22, overall achievement of the personal guidance benchmark for schools and colleges in a Careers Hub was 75%, compared to 61% for those not in a Careers Hub.

To show how to deliver the personal guidance benchmark effectively and affordably, the Department funded the Careers & Enterprise Company between 2018 and 2021 to develop new cost effective models of personal guidance, resulting in a range of case studies. Practitioners accessed funded training within the project with 156 careers advisers receiving training. 97 gained Level 6 qualifications.

The Department's careers statutory guidance recommends that schools and colleges consult the UK Register of Careers Professionals, held by the Career Development Institute (CDI), when bringing in a careers professional. As of May 2022, approximately 1,800 people were on the register. The CDI has a number of programmes in place to train and upskill careers advisers, including a focus on digital skills.

■ STEM Subjects: Women

Jo Gideon:

[\[161442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to International Women's Day on 8 March 2023, what progress the Government has made on encouraging more girls into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers, including conservation.

Nick Gibb:

In 2022, 72,683 state funded students took A level maths, of which 45% were female (32,542). Over 7,000 girls obtained an A* grade in A level Maths in 2022 and over 8,500 obtained an A grade.

Through the Careers & Enterprise Company's (CEC) networks of Careers Hubs and Enterprise Advisers, business volunteers are working with schools and colleges to build on this progress and provide increased opportunities for girls, to meet a wide range of employers and to experience a variety of workplaces, including in the Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) sector.

In 2021/22 the CEC funded Careers Hub Incubation Projects, targeted projects that tested approaches for delivering careers provision and measurable outcomes for young people. For example, Digital Futures in Lancashire aimed to increase the take-up of Computer Science GCSE amongst girls through the delivery of high quality, locally tailored Digital/STEM related careers activities delivered at varying intensities,

which will in turn increase the number of young females entering the digital workforce.

Employers and professional bodies in the STEM sector can sign up to 'Inspiring the Future', run by the Education and Employers charity. This free programme allows volunteers to visit state schools to talk to pupils about their job. This will raise the profile of various careers within the STEM sector.

The National Careers Service website gives customers access to a range of useful digital tools and resources to support them in making informed choices. 'Explore Careers' includes over 800 job profiles, including roles relating to science, maths, engineering and conservation. The role profile information describes what the roles entail, qualifications and entry routes. The content team regularly researches and updates content and welcomes updates from industry to ensure content is accurate and up to date.

■ **Teachers: Labour Turnover**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[161432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department has taken to increase the retention of (a) teaching staff and (b) maths teachers.

Nick Gibb:

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

Teacher retention is key to ensuring effective teacher supply and quality, and the Department is action to support teachers to stay in the profession and thrive. The Department has published a range of resources to help address teacher workload and wellbeing and support schools to introduce flexible working practices.

The Department has created an entitlement to at least three years of structured training, support and professional development for all new teachers. Underpinning this is the new initial teacher training (ITT) core content framework and the early career framework: together, these ensure that new teachers will benefit from at least three years of evidence-based training, across ITT and into their induction.

Beyond the first few years of teaching, the Department's priority is to help all teachers and headteachers to continuously develop their expertise throughout their careers so every child has the best start in life.

The Department has launched a new and updated suite of national professional qualifications (NPQs) for teachers and headteachers at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high-quality teaching practice to those leading multiple schools across trusts. Since autumn 2021, eligible teachers and headteachers have been able to obtain scholarships to undertake fully funded NPQs.

The Department remains committed to delivering £30,000 starting salaries to attract and retain the very best teachers: the Department has implemented the School

Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a significant 8.9% pay uplift to teacher starting salaries outside London in 2022/23, bringing them up to £28,000.

The Department knows there is further to go to improve recruitment in mathematics. That is why range of measures have been put in place, including bursaries worth £27,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £29,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees to teach mathematics. The Department is also offering a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 tax-free for mathematics (and physics, chemistry and computing) teachers in the first five years of their careers who choose to work in disadvantaged schools. This will support recruitment and retention of specialist teachers in these subjects and in the schools and areas that need them most.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Alternative Fuel Payments

Drew Hendry: [\[165287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on taking steps to ensure that Alternative Fuel Payments are received by domestic customers and not retained by energy providers.

Amanda Solloway:

The Department regularly engages with Ofgem on these matters and will discuss any issues as they arise. There is no evidence energy suppliers are retaining Alternative Fuel Payment grants. Electricity suppliers are currently subject to compliance monitoring and the Department will properly assure and audit payments. Any unused funds will be fully reconciled and recovered.

■ Boiler Upgrade Scheme

Charlotte Nichols: [\[161438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many Boiler Upgrade Scheme vouchers have been issued in each parliamentary constituency.

Graham Stuart:

The number of Boiler Upgrade Scheme vouchers issued by Parliamentary constituency between May 2022 and January 2023 is available in Table 1 published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ad-hoc-request-on-boiler-upgrade-scheme-number-of-vouchers-issued-by-parliamentary-constituency>

■ Carbon Capture and Storage

Charlotte Nichols: [\[162314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of when direct air carbon capture will be in operation.

Graham Stuart:

Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) technologies, including Direct Air Capture, will be essential for reaching net zero. The Net Zero Strategy included an ambition to deploy at least 5MtCO₂/yr of engineered removals by 2030, potentially rising to 23MtCO₂/yr by 2035.

A consultation on GGR business models was published in July 2022, setting out proposals for business models to attract private investment and enable GGR projects to deploy at scale from the late 2020s.

This builds on the £100m the Government is investing in research and innovation for GGRs, including the Direct Air Capture and GGR Innovation Competition. Phase 2 of the competition announced £54m of Government funding awarded across 15 of the most promising demonstration projects.

■ Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage and Hydrogen**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[162215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Government is taking steps to ensure measurement traceability for (a) fiscal and (b) financial transactions for the (i) Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage and (ii) hydrogen sectors.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is progressing business models to incentivise the application of CCUS and low carbon hydrogen at pace. A series of publications since December 2020 have provided updates on the development of the CCUS and hydrogen production business models. The Department, in consultation with technical advisors and stakeholders, is developing the fiscal metering requirements needed to meet the commercial needs of the various CCUS and hydrogen production business models and ensure traceability for environmental monitoring purposes. Outcomes of this will be stipulated in future publications.

■ Energy Charter Treaty**Caroline Lucas:**[\[161265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact on the UK's adoption of climate policy measures of the inclusion of investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in the Energy Charter Treaty modernisation package negotiated in 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The modernised Energy Charter Treaty would reaffirm and strengthen Contracting Parties' right to introduce measures for legitimate policy objectives, including to mitigate climate change. At the Energy Charter Conference on 22 November, the decision to adopt the modernised Treaty was postponed. The UK closely monitors the situation surrounding the Energy Charter Treaty's modernisation process, including the positions taken by other Contracting Parties.

Caroline Lucas: [\[161266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of whether a majority of other Contracting Parties to the Energy Charter Treaty support the modernisation package negotiated in 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [\[161267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to work with those Contracting Parties that have indicated their intention to withdraw from the Energy Charter Treaty to co-lead an orderly withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has been a strong advocate for ECT modernisation. At the Energy Charter Conference on 22 November, the decision to adopt the modernised Treaty was postponed. The UK has been closely monitoring the situation surrounding the Energy Charter Treaty's modernisation process, including the positions taken by other Contracting Parties, and will continue to do so.

■ Energy: Disability

Cat Smith: [\[161323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of rises in the cost of energy on families with disabled children.

Amanda Solloway:

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

Officials are considering the options and proactively discussing these with stakeholders. As part of this work, the Government is working with disability organisations, assessing the need for specific support for disabled people including families with disabled children.

Further to this support, the Government set out additional Cost of Living support for 2023-24 in the Autumn Statement. This includes:

- an additional Cost of Living Payment of £900 for households on means tested benefits;
- a further £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment;
- a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment.

■ Energy: National Policy Statements

Margaret Ferrier: [\[162197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what progress has been made in updating the Energy National Policy statements which have been under review since November 2021.

Graham Stuart:

To enable delivery of the commitments in April's British Energy Security Strategy, the Department has reviewed and strengthened these NPSs. This includes the EN-1 Overarching need case for energy infrastructure, EN-3 Renewable electricity infrastructure and EN-5 Electricity networks infrastructure. The review is to ensure they fully reflect the strategic importance of new energy infrastructure for delivering the UK's energy security and affordability and to deliver on Net Zero. The importance of this has been underlined by global events in the last 12 months since the end of the previous consultation. DESNZ will re-consult on these documents.

■ Energy: Prices

Dan Carden: [\[161387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the report by the Social Market Foundation and Public First entitled Fairer, warmer, cheaper: new energy bill support policies to support British households in an age of high prices, published on 8 March 2023, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of that report's (a) conclusions and (b) recommendations.

Amanda Solloway:

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

Officials are assessing evidence and options, including published reports, including 'Fairer, Warmer, Cheaper' and discussing these with stakeholders, including Citizens Advice, who commissioned this report. The Government will set out its position when this assessment is complete, in time to deliver a new approach from April 2024.

Stephen Morgan: [\[162278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if his Department will take steps to ensure that household energy costs do not increase in April 2023.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Price Guarantee will continue to support households with their energy bills from April 2023. During the winter, the Government has covered around half of a typical household's energy bills, cutting the average bill by around £1,300. The Government keeps all levels of support under review.

■ Energy: Standing Charges

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[162315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to remove standing charges for those households who produce energy domestically and supply it to the national grid.

Graham Stuart:

Standing charges recover the fixed costs of providing a live supply, including maintenance of the electricity and gas networks, the costs of metering energy, and supplier operational costs.

Ofgem has previously considered moving a portion of standing charges onto unit rates. It decided against this because it would increase costs overall and specifically increase costs for a number of higher users of energy including older pensioners on very low incomes (many in poverty or with health problems) and renters on low salaries with electric heating.

■ Home Upgrade Grant

Stephen Morgan:

[\[161397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department plans to provide a third phase of the Home Upgrade Grant.

Amanda Solloway:

The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) provides energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating measures to low-income households living in the worst performing, off gas grid homes in England. Phase 1 of HUG is being delivered as part of the Sustainable Warmth Competition. Up to £700 million has been made available for local authorities for phase 2 of HUG to be delivered from April 2023 to March 2025. This investment forms part of a wider package in which the Government taking our total investment to date to over £6.6bn over the lifetime of this parliament. There are currently no plans for a third phase of the Home Upgrade Grant. The Government will continue to work with HM Treasury to secure further funding at future spending reviews.

■ National Grid: Carbon Emissions

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[162198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to tackle barriers around planning and consent in developing the transmission network required to support a net zero grid.

Graham Stuart:

In the British Energy Security Strategy the Government committed to accelerating the delivery of electricity transmission infrastructure. The network blueprint, the Holistic Network Design for onshore-offshore transmission, will be referenced in the energy

National Policy Statements (NPS) for England and Wales, supporting the needs case for transmission projects.

■ Natural Gas and Oil

Fleur Anderson: [\[162311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment the Government has made of the potential impact of proposed new oil and gas field developments, including Jackdaw and Rosebank, on (a) the environment and (b) the wider economy.

Graham Stuart:

The environmental impact of proposed offshore oil and gas developments is subject to rigorous regulatory assessment by the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED), including a full environmental impact assessment and consultation with statutory nature protection bodies and the public.

While the Government has not undertaken an assessment of the potential impact of proposed new oil and gas field developments on the wider economy, Equinor estimates that Rosebank could create £8.1bn of direct investment. Jackdaw is part of a £20bn to £25bn investment by Shell UK in the UK energy system over the next decade.

■ North Sea Oil: Shetland

Dan Carden: [\[161389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department is taking steps to prevent oil spills on (a) the Faroe-Shetland Channel and (b) other Marine Protected Areas in the region of the proposed Rosebank oil field.

Graham Stuart:

All operators are legally obliged to prevent the occurrence of major accidents (which may include the risk of oil pollution), as well as an obligation to prevent oil spills from their operations, by having suitable management system arrangements in place.

These arrangements are inspected by the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment & Decommissioning (OPRED).

■ Renewable Energy: Portsmouth South

Stephen Morgan: [\[161396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to increase funding for renewable energy sources in Portsmouth South constituency.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is firmly committed to investing and developing the renewable industry in the UK. The Contracts for Difference scheme, the Government's main mechanism for supporting low carbon generation, is awarded through a competitive

process, ensuring that the most cost-effective projects are supported regardless of their location.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Afzal Khan: [\[165465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of the free allocation of permits to companies through the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

As the UK transitions to net zero, the Government is committed to protecting UK industry from carbon leakage (the movement of production and associated emissions from one country to another due to different levels of decarbonisation effort through carbon pricing and climate regulation), which is why the Government gives a proportion of free allowances to businesses under the UK ETS.

The Government is in the process of reviewing its free allocation policy. It consulted last year on technical short term improvements. The Government is also looking at ways to target free allocation to those sectors most at risk of carbon leakage. The Government will publish its response in due course.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare: Electronic Training Aids

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[163974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she intends to introduce a ban on electric shock collars.

Rebecca Pow:

We plan to introduce regulations soon which will prohibit the use of remote controlled electronic training collars that deliver an electric shock to cats and dogs.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[163976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Government has not prohibited the use of electric shock collars.

Rebecca Pow:

We remain committed to prohibiting the use of remote controlled electronic training collars that deliver an electric shock to cats and dogs. We will introduce the necessary legislation soon.

■ Animal Welfare: Standards

Kenny MacAskill: [\[165437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to improve animal welfare standards in (a) animal sanctuaries and (b) rehoming organisations.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[165439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to launch a public consultation on the introduction of the regulation of rehoming activities for (a) animal sanctuaries and (b) rehoming organisations in 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare includes commitments to pursuing the licensing of animal sanctuaries, rescue and rehoming centres including for cats, dogs and horses. Defra has been engaging with relevant organisations to understand their views and the possible impacts of regulating the sector. Any proposals to bring forward licensing regulations will be subject to a consultation.

■ Avian Influenza

Dan Jarvis: [\[165281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the spread of Avian Flu amongst domestically-kept bird flocks.

Mark Spencer:

Defra's approach to avian influenza disease prevention and control measures are based on risk assessments containing the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice. To facilitate this the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carry out routine surveillance of disease risks both in the UK and around the world to help Government anticipate future threats to animal health and understand the risk of spread of avian influenza in both kept and wild birds in Great Britain during outbreaks.

The latest APHA outbreak and risk assessments are published and available on GOV.UK through the ['Animal diseases: international and UK monitoring'](#) collection. In summary, APHA currently assess the risk of incursion of highly pathogenic (HPAI) avian influenza H5 in wild birds in Great Britain as very high (i.e. event occurs almost certainly). The risk of poultry exposure to HPAI H5 in Great Britain is currently assessed as high (with low uncertainty) where there are substantial biosecurity breaches and poor biosecurity and medium (i.e. event occurs regularly) (with medium uncertainty) where good biosecurity is applied.

Dan Jarvis: [\[165283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is her Department taking to inform domestic owners of bird flocks of compliance with any new Housing Orders to stop the spread of Avian Flu.

Mark Spencer:

To assist all bird keepers in instigating and maintaining good biosecurity including compliance with the mandatory Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) housing measures currently in force in England Defra have published biosecurity guidance available at [Bird flu \(avian influenza\): how to prevent it and stop it spreading - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-flu-avian-influenza-how-to-prevent-it-and-stop-it-spreading) and [Bird flu \(avian influenza\): housing your birds safely - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-flu-avian-influenza-housing-your-birds-safely). Defra and its delivery agency for disease control the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) utilise a range of communication channels to reach and inform domestic owners of bird flocks of this guidance and the latest situation and disease control measures, including, the use of social media, posters, radio adverts, podcasts, and video content. In addition to text and emails email alerts for those on the [poultry register](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-register) and those who have signed up to [APHA disease alert subscription service](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apha-disease-alert-subscription-service).

Defra also issue national, local and trade press releases to make sure the latest information is communicated through the media. In addition to this we keep a rolling gov.uk news story with live updates as new advice and cases emerge. During the avian influenza outbreak the UK Chief Veterinary Officer has regularly been interviewed about the avian influenza situation and advice by journalists from multiple national news outlets. Defra spokespeople have also undertaken interviews with regional television and radio broadcasters from a range of channels across the country to raise awareness of the disease control measures that are in force.

Defra regularly meets with representatives of the Local Authority National Animal Health and Welfare Panel to review and refine the approach to guidance and the enforcement of disease prevention and controls. Government is also working closely with key stakeholders including commercial, small scale, pet and specialist bird keepers, together with ornithological, veterinary, wildlife rehabilitation sector representatives, to communicate developments and reiterate the importance of biosecurity.

Dan Jarvis:**[165284]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to monitor compliance of any new Housing Orders for bird flocks belonging to domestic owners to stop the spread of Avian Flu.

Mark Spencer:

Avian influenza disease prevention and controls, including the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone mandatory housing measures, are enforced by local authorities. They take a proportionate approach to non-compliance. We are in regular contact with local authorities and details of compliance and enforcement are shared with Defra by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) Regulatory Affairs and Intelligence team. APHA chairs regular outbreak enforcement meetings which are attended by representatives from local authority Trading Standards teams from across Great Britain together with policy representatives from Defra, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government.

■ Birds: Conservation

David Warburton:

[\[162526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to protect the habitat of woodcock birds.

Trudy Harrison:

We are expanding and improving woodcock habitat through grant schemes funded by both the Countryside Stewardship scheme and the Nature for Climate Fund. These grants include the Woods into Management Forestry Innovation Funds, which aim to restore vulnerable woodland habitats and improve biodiversity, as well as the England Woodland Creation Offer. In addition, we are introducing new environmental land management schemes, which will pay for activities to create, manage and restore habitats such as woodland, connect isolated habitats to form networks, and other species management actions, all of which will benefit birds such as woodcock.

Woodcock also benefit from England's extensive network of protected sites for wildlife such as sites of special scientific interest.

■ Birds: Crime

Caroline Lucas:

[\[162161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that wildlife crimes committed against birds during the HPAI pandemic are fully investigated.

Trudy Harrison:

This government takes wildlife crime seriously. Those found guilty of crimes against our wild birds should be subject to the full force of the law. The ongoing H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreak has brought challenges in particular cases where wild birds have died in suspicious circumstances. In some situations where a wild bird carcass has tested positive for avian influenza, further post mortem examination to, for example, test for poisoning may not always be possible due to the need to handle carcasses and samples very carefully, at high containment, in order to protect public health and prevent spread of avian influenza. The government seeks to minimise the number of these cases.

For instance, the APHA Diseases of Wildlife Scheme (DoWS) is working closely with the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) run on the behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) by Natural England. WIIS makes enquiries into the death or illness of wildlife that may have resulted from pesticide or rodenticide poisoning. This can lead to identifying and penalising those who deliberately or recklessly misuse such substances. Dead wild birds submitted to APHA where poisoning is suspected are investigated by DoWS in collaboration with WIIS. Investigations include post-mortem examinations where carcasses can be handled bio-securely. The government and relevant partners are alive to the enforcement challenges the HPAI pandemic has brought. We continue to work closely between Defra, the National Wildlife Crime

Unit (NWCU), Scottish and Welsh Governments, Natural England, APHA and the HSE to explore options and identify how all cases can be fully investigated.

■ Convention on Biological Diversity

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[163943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with her international counterparts on taking steps to meet target two and three of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Trudy Harrison:

Since its adoption, the UK has engaged a range of Parties at Ministerial level regarding implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and its targets. This includes discussions held by the Secretary of State with the USA during her visit in February, with multiple Parties at the Our Ocean Conference in Panama, and most recently with France at the 36th France-UK Summit. Similar engagement has also been undertaken by Lord Benyon with counterparts in the margins of IMPAC5 (5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress), and by Lord Goldsmith at the One Forest Summit in Gabon.

In addition, the UK is taking a leading role in promoting and supporting specific action implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework (including the 30by30 target), through our role as Chair of the Global Ocean Alliance and Ocean Co-chair of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People.

■ Dogs: Electronic Training Aids

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[163975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on research into electronic dog training aids in the last ten years; what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of that research; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

My Department commissioned research projects AW1402: 'Effect of pet training aids, specifically remote static pulse systems, on the welfare of domestic dogs' and AW1402A: 'Studies to assess the effect of pet training aids, specifically remote static pulse systems on the welfare of domestic dogs; field study of dogs in training', at a cost of £469,000 and £69,925 respectively. The findings of both projects were published in 2014.

Findings from these research projects informed our decision to ban the use of remote controlled electronic training collars that deliver an electric shock to cats and dogs, given their scope to cause harm.

We plan to introduce these regulations soon.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Waste Disposal

Peter Gibson: [\[161411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has produced guidance for local councils on the disposal of illegal vapes once seized by trading standards.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency provides guidance on a wide variety of waste management requirements, including on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and chemicals. Illegal vapes seized by trading standards that are being discarded would be classified as WEEE with associated chemical components and as such should be handled in line with existing guidance on WEEE and chemical waste management. The Environment Agency is working with industry to establish what the best available recycling and recovery techniques are so we can ensure they are treated responsibly.

■ Environment Protection

Caroline Lucas: [\[162163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish a list of those policies which are still extant and feature in the 25 Year Environment Plan but are not included in the Government's new Environmental Improvement Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

Our [revised Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (EIP23), published in January 2023, makes clear that we remain committed to the 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) by building on its 10 environmental goals.

EIP23 sets out the progress made against the 25YEP goals, the specific targets and commitments for each goal, and our plans to continue to deliver against them. Our statutory targets complement and build on our environmental commitments and objectives that will drive improvement across the natural environment.

We will continue to track, monitor, and report annually on progress towards delivering the 25YEP goals through the published Annual Progress Report, and Outcome Indicator Framework.

■ Fishing Gear: Waste Disposal

Samantha Dixon: [\[162543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to prevent discarding of fishing nets in the sea by vessels landing at ports.

Mark Spencer:

The UK is committed to protecting the marine environment from all human-induced stressors, including marine litter such as abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). We are exploring methods to recycle and reuse ALDFG as well as end of life gear at ports and aquaculture farms with the intention of moving the sector to-

wards a circular economy model. The UK is also working collaboratively at the International Maritime Organization to further address actions that have been identified under its 2018 Action Plan and 2021 Strategy on marine plastic litter from ships, in particular ALDFG.

As a Contracting Party to the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, the UK is implementing actions under the new OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter to tackle fishing gear as marine litter and have committed to ambitious targets under the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy.

The UK is a member of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI), the first initiative dedicated to tackling this problem on a global scale. Through the UK's £500m Blue Planet Fund that was launched in 2021, we are also working in partnership with developing countries to tackle marine pollution, including ALDFG.

■ Fishing Vessels: Regulation

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[165385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the pelagic supertrawler fishing fleet to stop the bycatch of (a) dolphins and (b) other non-target species.

Mark Spencer:

We are considering our policies for large pelagic trawlers, commonly known as supertrawlers, and working to develop more robust management of the non-quota species which these vessels are targeting alongside quota stocks.

In 2022, the UK Government and Devolved Administrations published the UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative. This sets out how we will work collaboratively with the fishing industry and other stakeholders to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the bycatch of sensitive marine species, such as dolphins.

■ Neonicotinoids

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[165297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2023 to Question 146873 on Neonicotinoids, what the result of the exercise conducted by Rothamsted Research on 1 March on predicted virus incidence was; and whether the threshold for the use of Cruiser SB has been met.

Mark Spencer:

As per the conditions of the emergency authorisation granted in 2023, the seed treatment is only permitted for use if the predicted virus incidence level is 63% or above, as determined on 1 March 2023 by the Rothamsted YV forecast model. The forecast has been run and predicted a virus incidence of 67.51%. Sugar beet seed may therefore be treated with Cruiser SB and distributed to those growers who ordered it.

■ Pets: Theft**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[165230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress she has made on establishing a new offence of pet abduction; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

A new offence of pet abduction is included in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. The date for the remaining stages of the Bill will be announced in the usual way.

■ Pets: Travel**Ian Mearns:** [\[165313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2023 to Question 108424 on Pets: Travel, what progress she has made in negotiations with the European Commission on awarding Great Britain Part 1 listed status to enable pet owners to travel outside the UK with fewer restrictions.

Rebecca Pow:

We are continuing to engage with the European Commission on awarding Great Britain 'Part 1' listed status and recognition of the UK's tapeworm-free status.

■ Pigs: Animal Housing**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[162521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of banning farrowing crates for pigs.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[162522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has plans to launch a consultation on the use of cages in farming systems.

Mark Spencer:

The Government is committed to exploring the use of cages. However, no formal timelines for consultations have been confirmed as yet.

■ Tree Planting**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[162165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees her Department has planted since September 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

The Forestry Commission reports on the area of land newly planted with trees in England annually in the Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators available on GOV.UK. The most recent report available is for 2021-22 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-report-for-2021-22>. It states that 2,416 hectares of land has been newly

planted with trees with government support. This equates to an estimate of 4.0 million trees.

The interim figures for the first half of 2022-23 are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forestry-commission-key-performance-indicators-headline-performance-update-at-30-september-2022>. This report states that 817 hectares of land has been newly planted with trees with government support. This equates to an estimate of 1.4 million trees.

■ Wildlife: Crime

Caroline Lucas:

[162162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what her Department's timeline is for responding to (a) the UN Office of Drugs and Crime's 2021 report on the UK's approach to tackling wildlife crime and (b) the recommendation for stronger regulation to properly address raptor persecution.

Trudy Harrison:

We welcomed the UN Office of Drugs and Crime report and the fact that it recognised the UK's global leadership in fighting wildlife and forestry crime. We invited the UN to undertake this analysis and we are proud to be the first G7 country to request this assessment.

We have carefully considered all the recommendations of the report and they are informing our work to help us build on the positive progress we have already made in tackling wildlife crime. This will include strategic engagement with our partners that have responsibilities where individual recommendations are concerned such as the devolved administrations, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU).

Progress has already been made in response to the report. For example, in 2022 Defra more than doubled its funding of the NWCU from a total of £495,000 over the three previous years to £1.2 million for the three year period of 2022-25. Additionally, Border Force has increased numbers in their team specialising in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Defra is not under any obligation to formally respond to the UNODC's assessment and has no plans to do so, but we will identify where we can act, including with stakeholders, to strengthen the UK's approach to tackling wildlife and forestry crime. This includes recommendations to address raptor persecution. Where any protected birds are killed illegally the full force of the law should apply to any proven perpetrators of the crime. We already have significant sanctions for this type of wildlife crime in place which includes an unlimited fine and/or a six-month custodial sentence. To address concerns about the illegal killing of birds of prey, senior government and enforcement officers have identified raptor persecution as a national wildlife crime priority. Defra continues to be fully involved with the police-led national Bird of Prey Crime Priority Delivery Group which brings together police, government and stakeholders and the

extra funding we now provide to the NWCU is also to be allocated towards wildlife crime priorities including crimes against our birds of prey.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bangladesh: Ahmadiyya

Fleur Anderson:

[\[163914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations has he made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the attacks on the Ahmadiyya Jalsa Salana in Bangladesh in March 2023.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Preventing religious violence and upholding Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in Bangladesh remains a UK priority. In March, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon raised the importance of FoRB with State Minister Alam and I [Minister Trevelyan] underlined respect for human rights with PM Hasina during my visit to Bangladesh. Our support in Bangladesh aims to ensure that the rights of religious minorities, including the Ahmadiyya community, are respected and that these communities are protected from discrimination. We regularly engage with a wide range of civil society and NGO partners to understand the causes and effects of inter-religious conflict.

■ BGI Group: National Security

Catherine West:

[\[165503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) five eyes counterparts on the activities of BGI Group; and if the Government will make an assessment of the potential benefits of an investigation of that company.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We continually monitor threats to our data and will not hesitate to take action if necessary to protect our national security. We expect all firms to fully comply with UK privacy laws. Businesses which do not may be investigated and subject to enforcement action. We have also strengthened measures to prevent the transfer of assets or technology that could pose national security risks. This includes upgrading our export control regime and Military End Use Control and introducing the National Security and Investment Act.

■ Development Aid: Fraud

Sarah Champion:

[\[161301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate his Department has made of the (a) sum and (b) proportion of (i) Official Development Assistance spending and (ii) British International Investments that were written off as a result of fraud in each of the last 10 years for which data is available.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

There have been no write-offs of British International Investment spending in the last ten years as a result of fraud. The suitability of international organisations receiving Official Development Assistance (ODA), including the projects they organise and grants they provide, is continually assessed through FCDO annual reviews and business cases, as set out in the Department's Programme Operating Framework.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) independently scrutinises UK ODA to international organisations to assess value for money and impact, including recent ICAI reviews of tackling fraud in multilateral organisations. For example, the 'Tackling fraud in UK aid through multilateral organisations' review was published on 22 March 2022.

ODA spend is reported on a calendar year basis in line with international reporting requirements; from 2015 to 2021 totalled £95.2 billion. Based on write off and fraud loss data, our records show that losses written off because of fraud cases totalled £3.0 million over the financial years 2015/16 to 2021/21. This equates to 0.003% of the proportion of ODA written off because of fraud.

The tables below provide the breakdown requested.

Calendar Year	UK Net ODA (£)
2015	12,135,596,440
2016	13,377,131,230
2017	14,051,240,110
2018	14,542,017,180
2019	15,175,654,880
2020	14,476,944,180
2021	11,422,628,910
Total	95,181,212,930

FINANCIAL YEAR	£ OF WRITE OFF/FRAUD
2015/2016	156,967
2016/2017	58,095
2017/2018	1,096,551

FINANCIAL YEAR	£ OF WRITE OFF/FRAUD
2018/2019	955,262
2019/2020	401,121
2020/2021	71,886
2021/2022	218,349
Total	2,958,231

■ EU Law: Northern Ireland

Mr David Jones:

[\[165262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2023 to Question 161247 on Windsor Framework, if he will publish a list of the less than three percent of EU rules that now apply to Northern Ireland.

Leo Docherty:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 March 2023 to Question 161247 [<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-08/161247>].

■ Malawi: Storms

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[165184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to help support Malawi with the impacts of Cyclone Freddy.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is working closely with the Government of Malawi and international agencies to respond to Cyclone Freddy. We are supporting the Emergency Operations Centre established in Blantyre and working closely with partners to rapidly identify the needs of those affected. We are looking at options for further UK support including how we can help those still stranded, help manage trauma cases and extend our support to tackle the ongoing cholera outbreak.

■ Nepal: Development Aid

Navendu Mishra:

[\[163979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which UK Government (a) agencies and (b) other bodies are (i) operating in Nepal and (ii) working with the Nepalese government.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Collaboration with UK Government Agencies and other bodies is an important part of our relationship in Nepal. There are various agencies and other bodies working in Nepal or with the Government of Nepal. Those working in the country include the British Council, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and BBC World Service. In addition there are organisations that are not based in Nepal but are engaged in work with Nepal. Those include the Chevening Scholarship Programme and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority. There are a number of other agencies who work with the Government of Nepal on an ad hoc basis.

■ **Phillip Mehrstens****John Howell:**[\[162495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) his New Zealand counterpart and (b) relevant stakeholders on the abduction of Phillip Mehrstens in central Papua.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

FCDO Ministers have not had discussions with their New Zealand counterparts over this specific case. The British Embassy in Jakarta is in contact with the New Zealand Embassy to support their response. We continue to monitor developments closely.

■ **UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland****Mr David Jones:**[\[165352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the qualification requirements are that a carrier must fulfil in order to obtain approval under the proposed Trusted Trader Scheme in the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The requirements include having a system in place to maintain appropriate control of their operations and having no recent history of serious infringements related to their economic activity.

Mr David Jones:[\[165353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the costs to (a) hauliers and (b) traders of using the green lane proposed in the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The green lane will mean that goods being sold in Northern Ireland will be freed of unnecessary paperwork, checks and duties, using only ordinary commercial information rather than customs processes or complex certification requirements for agrifood. Goods moved in the green lane will face no tariffs or no rules of origin requirements. Sanitary and Phytosanitary goods in the green lane will move on the basis of a simplified single certificate per lorry, removing the need for costly veterinary certificates. And movements in the green lane will continue to benefit from

the existing Trader Support Service. Further guidance on the green lane will be provided in due course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Arthritis: Surgery

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[162152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will support the dissemination of the Versus Arthritis Surgery Toolkit to all ICSs.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning the majority of services for people within the geographical boundaries of their integrated care system and should use guidance from a range of sources as clinically appropriate. To support the health of people with arthritis while they are waiting for elective treatment, NHS England has worked with Versus Arthritis on their Joint Replacement Support Package, a six-point package aimed at local health systems to be provided to patients.

■ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Children

Jim Shannon: [\[163753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the levels of ADHD diagnoses among children aged under 18 in each of the last five years.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made. There is, at present, no single, established dataset that can be used to monitor the number of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnoses nationally.

Data from the Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017 reported that about one in sixty (1.6%) of five- to 19-year-olds were identified as having a hyperactivity disorder. This was an estimate based on a sample. If all children in the population had participated, it is likely that the proportion identified with a hyperactivity disorder would have been between 1.4% and 1.9%.

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

■ Cancer: Health Services

Wes Streeting: [\[161353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were on NHS waiting lists who had been waiting for more than 62 days for cancer treatment as of 8 March 2023.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 March 2023]: The latest published figures from NHS England show that, as of the week ending 26 February 2023, there were 22,282 people waiting more than 62 days from an urgent general practitioner referral for suspected cancer to either be diagnosed with cancer and beginning treatment, or to have cancer ruled out.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Dan Carden: [\[165487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with campaign groups on visiting in care settings.

Helen Whately:

Department officials and I have met with campaign group representatives several times to hear their concerns and discuss the range of options to strengthen visiting requirements and reduce instances where individuals in care settings are unable to receive visitors. The Department will continue working with campaign groups and other stakeholders to ensure that visiting in care settings remains a priority.

Dan Carden: [\[165492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to consult on legislative proposals on visiting requirements for care homes.

Helen Whately:

Government guidance states that every care home resident should be able to have at least one visitor in all circumstances. We are working at pace to review a range of options to strengthen visiting requirements and avoid instances where residents are unable to receive visitors.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Employment

Mark Pritchard: [\[161255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support adults with cerebral palsy to remain economically active.

Helen Whately:

A range of Government initiatives are supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, including cerebral palsy, to start, stay, and succeed in work. These include:

- Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies, which combines psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions;
- increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work;

- the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace; and
- the Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace.

■ **Chronic Illnesses: Health and Safety**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government will take to encourage healthy workplaces for people with long term conditions as part of the renewed focus on encouraging people to return to work.

Helen Whately:

It is important that workplaces enable disabled people and people with health conditions to stay in and succeed at work. The Government works with employers nationally to achieve this.

A range of support is available and includes:

- increasing access to occupational health, including the testing of financial incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises and the self-employed;
- the Disability Confident scheme, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace;
- the Information and Advice Service, providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace;
- the Mental Health and Productivity Pilot, providing insight into how to use mental health and wellbeing interventions in the workplace; and
- Non-statutory guidance providing advice on accessibility, communication, occupational health support, inclusivity, and sickness support.

■ **Doctors: Pensions**

Wes Streeting:

[\[160334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the potential costs and benefits of introducing a tax unregistered scheme in relation to NHS doctors' pensions.

Wes Streeting:[\[160335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact on retention of NHS doctors of introducing a tax unregistered scheme in relation to NHS doctors' pensions..

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 14 March 2023]: An unregistered pension scheme would not benefit the vast majority of National Health Service staff, as they would lose the benefit of tax-relief on their contributions and a tax-free lump sum on retirement. A separate unregistered scheme for the very highest earners in the NHS would take them outside the pension tax system. It would allow members to not pay annual allowance or lifetime allowance tax charges, excluding them from the allowances for tax-free pension saving that apply to the rest of society. This would remove a barrier to the amount of additional work they can perform particularly for £200,000 plus earners affected by the annual allowance taper.

In order to make an unregistered arrangement more favourable to members than a registered scheme, a substantial subsidy would need to be provided to the reward packages of those in a scheme in the form of increased employer contributions. A subsidy of around 5% of pay would be needed to match the benefit of tax-relief on contributions, and a further subsidy of around 3% of pay would be required to provide the equivalent of a tax-free lump sum on retirement. These subsidies would require significant investment from the taxpayer in order for an unregistered scheme to work. Estimates from the Department suggest this would range from £500 million to £700 million per year, depending on take up and scheme design.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Regulation**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[163726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of banning single use disposable vaping devices.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 16 March 2023]: No assessment has been made of the potential merits of banning single use disposable vaping devices. However, the Government is concerned by the increasing use of disposable vaping products, particularly amongst children, and their impact on the environment when they become waste. The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs on developing the evidence base to better understand those impacts.

■ Government Champion for Personalised Prevention: Public Appointments

Andrew Gwynne: [\[163734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the cost to the public purse of the appointment of the (a) Government Champion for Personalised Prevention and (b) his taskforce.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 16 March 2023]: The Government Champion for Personalised Prevention is an unpaid role. Neither Professor John Deanfield as the Government Champion for Personalised Prevention, nor any members of his Taskforce, will be paid for their time during the course of the minimum six month appointment.

■ Health Services

Stephen Morgan: [\[162274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which health conditions have care coordinators for patients within the NHS to provide tailored support within local areas.

Helen Whately:

The information is not available in the format requested.

Dan Carden: [\[165489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals similar to those set out in the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made. The Government is implementing its own reform programme of adult social care with a 10 year vision that puts people at heart of adult social care. The Health & Care Act 2022 provides the relevant legislation for our plans for data, assurance and integration.

We have made good progress on reform by increasing sector digitisation, developing our approach for assurance of local authorities, and enhancing the collection and use of data. In spring 2023, we will publish a plan setting out how we will build on this progress.

The Department meets regularly with officials in the Devolved Administrations to explore how we can learn from our different approaches to adult social care reform.

■ Health Services: Women

Julian Knight: [\[163798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department is allocating to support the creation of new women's health hubs, as part of the Women's Health Strategy for England.

Maria Caulfield:

On 8 March we announced a £25 million investment over the next two years to accelerate the development of women's health hubs as part of the Women's Health Strategy for England. Women across the country will benefit from tailored health care and support by the new hubs improving access and quality of care for services for menstrual problems, contraception, pelvic pain, menopause care and more.

Health: Disadvantaged**Peter Dowd:**[\[162207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 January 2023 to Question 128715 on Health: Disadvantages, what plans he has to expand the Major Conditions Strategy to cover ethnic and gender disparities.

Peter Dowd:[\[162209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's Major Conditions Strategy will include the impact of multimorbidity.

Helen Whately:

The Major Conditions Strategy will support health and care services to diagnose individuals earlier as well as helping them to manage their conditions better and improving the overall co-ordination of their treatment and care. This will include a focus on multi-morbidity.

We will look at the health of people at all stages of life from prevention through to living well with one or more major conditions. We will also include a focus on geographical and other differences in health that contribute to variations in health outcomes.

Healthy Start Scheme: Digital Technology**Simon Lightwood:**[\[165488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of families who may be eligible for backdated payments due to delays in digitisation of the Healthy Start scheme; and whether his Department is taking steps to provide interim support to those families.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority operate the Healthy Start scheme on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care. They identified an issue with the application process following the digitisation of the scheme and worked with Department for Work and Pensions to resolve the issue quickly. All those who may be eligible for a backdated payment have received or are due to receive payments.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Liz Kendall:

[\[165368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the press notice entitled Up to £250 million to speed up hospital discharge, published by his Department on 9 January 2023, whether there is a deadline by which that funding needs to be spent.

Helen Whately:

The £50 million capital funding and the £200 million funding for short-term National Health Service step down care packages is required to be incurred by 31 March 2023.

■ Key Workers: Long Covid

Fleur Anderson:

[\[161435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of proposals for a compensation, settlement and pension scheme for key workers affected by long covid.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made. The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work with the Department for Work and Pensions, and as more evidence about the disease emerges, will consider the Government's provisions and approach for those key workers experiencing the long-term effects of COVID-19.

■ Musculoskeletal Disorders: Employment

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[162150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will provide funding to employers to develop resources for employees with musculoskeletal conditions.

Helen Whately:

Government is taking steps to help employers support their employees with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions. In October 2022 we published the Musculoskeletal (MSK) Health Toolkit for employers and further education institutions which encourages employers to support adolescents and young adults with MSK conditions.

The Musculoskeletal Health Toolkit for Employers was developed in partnership with Business in the Community and provides practical information for employers of all sizes to address MSK conditions in the workplace for the working age population.

We also have a new online service, which is currently in live national testing, the Support with Employee Health and Disability service. This offers tailored guidance to help employers better support disabled people and those with health conditions in the workplace.

■ NHS Digital and NHS England: Data Protection

Maria Eagle:

[\[160209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure (a) NHS Digital and (b) NHS England are compliant with their data protection obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

NHS Digital functions legally transferred to NHS England on 1 February 2023. NHS England is consequently responsible for ensuring it meets its obligations to protect people's data. Data protection law will continue to apply. This means there must always be a valid, lawful basis for the collection and processing of personal information including special category information within federated data platforms and any other NHS England IT system, as defined under data protection legislation. Data protection impact assessments must be carried out and privacy notices published which explain what data is collected, analysed and shared and for what purposes.

NHS England must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care under the power in section 274A of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which sets out measures that the Secretary of State expects NHS England to take to protect confidential information. The draft guidance has been published on GOV.UK, and the finalised guidance will be published shortly, and kept under review.

NHS England is legally required to report annually to Parliament on how well it has discharged its data functions. NHS England also makes an annual Data Security and Protection submission which demonstrates how they meet data protection obligations.

■ NHS: Privatisation

Cat Smith:

[\[161320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the report by Goodair and Reeves entitled Outsourcing health-care services to the private sector and treatable mortality rates in England, 2013–20: an observational study of NHS privatisation, published in the Lancet in July 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

The safety of all patients, whether they are treated in the National Health Service or the independent sector, is a top priority for the Government. All providers of healthcare are regulated by the Care Quality Commission and follow a set of fundamental standards of safety and quality, below which care should never fall. The Department considers a wide range of material when developing policies. We do not intend to make a specific assessment of this report.

■ Patients: Digital Technology and Social Media

Rachael Maskell: [\[157669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with digital and social media companies on information sharing to support patients and people in the community.

Will Quince:

NHS England has created a standard for health content targeted at digital and social media companies. It has worked with Google to ensure that the top 300 conditions are surfaced as knowledge panels, syndicating the content from NHS.UK into their search engine. It has also worked with Amazon to surface this content via its Alexa service. Work continues with other platforms to provide equitable access to assured content.

The purpose of these activities has been to address misinformation and disinformation and provide citizens with clinically assured content from reputable sources.

■ Processed Food

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[163765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a percentage reduction target for ultra-processed food consumption levels.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[163766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to introduce dietary guidelines to improve awareness of ultra-processed foods.

Fleur Anderson: [\[163967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will consider the potential merits of (a) ensuring that the Good Choice badge in the NHS Food Scanner App is not applied to ultra-processed food products, (b) introducing dietary guidelines on consumption of ultra-processed foods, (c) introducing targets for reducing consumption of ultra-processed food by 2030, (d) conducting research on families' experience of accessing (i) ultra-processed and (ii) healthy foods and (e) taking steps to ensure the (A) accessibility and (B) affordability of healthy foods.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government encourages everyone to have a healthy balanced diet in line with the United Kingdom's healthy eating model, the Eatwell Guide, which shows that foods high in fat, salt or sugar should be eaten less often or in small amounts.

UK Government dietary guidelines are based on recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). SACN is currently carrying out a scoping review of the evidence on processed foods and health and aims to publish its initial assessment in the summer of 2023.

There is currently no universally agreed definition of ultra-processed foods. However, a diet high in foods classified as processed is often high in calories, salt, saturated fat and sugar and low in fibre, fruit and vegetables, which is associated with an increased risk of obesity and developing chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

The Good Choice badge helps people identify healthier options using the NHS Food Scanner app and when shopping in store and online. The app helps families to see what is in their food and drinks and suggests healthier alternatives, where these exist, that can help them cut down on sugar, saturated fat and salt. The Good Choice badge is underpinned by nutrition criteria that determine which products can display the badge.

The app and wider Better Health campaign supports families on their journey towards having a healthier diet, as making the step to the healthiest option may be too far for many people in one move.

The Department, through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), funds a range of important research on obesity. This includes a project in the NIHR Obesity Policy Research Unit investigating how families in areas of low income experience food environments and another project investigating factors that drive parental decisions regarding food provision for infants across socio-economic position.

The Healthy Start Scheme supports eligible low-income families to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. Recipients are also eligible for free Healthy start vitamins, boosting the long-term health of their children. The value of these vouchers was increased from £3.10 to £4.25 a week in April 2021, ensuring more families can have access to healthy and nourishing foods.

The Department for Education spend over £1 billion each year on free school meals. This includes around £600 million on Universal Infant Free School Meals, where the per meal rate has been increased to £2.41, backdated to April 2022 in recognition of recent cost pressures.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Health Services

Janet Daby:

[\[160411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to create an accessible portal to access sickle cell patient records and care plans.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no current plans to create a portal to access sickle cell patients' records and care plans.

It is essential that patients and their care teams have appropriate access to information relevant to their care. That is why the Department and NHS England have already published commitments to ensure all patients can access their health information, so they are empowered to make better decisions about their health, and

to reduce the dependency on contacting general practices (GPs) for information that they could readily access. Giving patients access to their GP records data has been a long-standing GP contractual commitment, and one in five GPs now offer full prospective access to their patients. We remain committed to increasing the number of patients who can view their GP health record through the NHS App and other online services.

The National Haemoglobinopathy Registry is a confidential database of patients with red cell disorders living in the United Kingdom. It holds clinically important information related to patients' health, treatment and complications, and is available to specialist haemoglobinopathy teams. The Haemoglobinopathies Clinical Reference Group is in the process of developing a standard care plan template, which can be used in a digital format. Options for making this widely available to patients and clinicians across the patient pathway are currently being explored.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Training

Janet Daby:

[160416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of redeploying staff to other parts of country on the ability of medical students to participate in sickle cell specialist practical training.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made and there are no plans to do so. The standard of training for health care professionals is the responsibility of the health care independent statutory regulatory bodies such as the General Medical Council, the Nursing and Midwifery Council and Health and Care Professions Council, which are independent statutory bodies. These have the general function of promoting high standards of education and co-ordinating all stages of education to ensure that health and care students and newly qualified healthcare professionals are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential for professional practice.

The healthcare regulators set the standards expected at undergraduate level and approve courses. In so doing, they play an important role in setting out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that healthcare professionals must be able to demonstrate. The Higher Education Institutes write and teach the curricula content that enables their students to meet the regulators standards.

Recent improvements have been made to the postgraduate haematology medical curriculum, with understanding sickle cell disease and thalassaemia now described in the curriculum as core competencies.

Additional training is also available for medical trainees across England to receive specialist training to treat people with sickle cell disease. This includes an e-learning programme delivered by Health Education England which has specific courses such as the NHS Screening Programme and includes the Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screening Programme.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access**Jim Shannon:****[161293]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access on (a) clinical trials in the UK, (b) income for the NHS and (c) access to new medicines for patients.

Will Quince:

The Government has assessed the link between the volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS). The Government's 2023 impact assessment of updates to the statutory scheme is available at the following link:

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

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

With regard to the impact of price regulation on the placement of clinical trials in the UK and access to new medicines, 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. These incentives have contributed to VPAS driving significant improvements in patient access to clinically and cost-effective medicines, whilst ensuring sustainable and predictable spend growth for the National Health Service and industry during a period of economic uncertainty.

With regard to income received under the schemes for the NHS, the income from VPAS helps to ensure that the branded medicines bill remains affordable for the NHS.

Jim Shannon:**[161294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the payment rates under the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access on the level of research and development in the UK, including clinical trials.

Will Quince:

The Government has assessed the link between the volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS). The Government's 2023 impact assessment of updates to the statutory scheme is available at the following link:

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

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

With regard to the impact of medicine price regulation schemes on the level of research and development in the UK, 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.

Chris Green:**[162213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology on the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry proposals for a new Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Growth, including the proposals for (a) an investment facility, (b) to build a data recruitment centre and (c) a fund for a Medicines Equity Partnership.

Will Quince:

The Department carefully considers all evidence in the public domain on matters relating to the growth and competitiveness of the United Kingdom life science sector, including the recent report by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

The Department of Health and Social Care is in close discussions with Ministers from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Business and Trade about the business environment for life sciences and its impact on investment.

Chris Green:

[162214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the rebate rates under the (a) voluntary and (b) statutory scheme for branded medicines on (i) the placement of clinical trials in the UK, (ii) the prioritisation of the UK as a launch market for new medicines and (iii) patient outcomes in the next five years.

Will Quince:

The Government has assessed the link between volume-based rebate payments in our medicine pricing schemes and various kinds of investment in our impact assessment of recent updates to the statutory scheme for branded medicines pricing, which operates alongside the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS).

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

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

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

Controlling medicine spend is a key aim for both current and future schemes to improve patient outcomes by simplifying, streamlining and improving access, pricing, and uptake arrangements for cost effective medicines, and deliver faster adoption of the most clinically and cost-effective medicines.

With regard to the impact of price regulation on the placement of clinical trials in the UK and access to new medicines, 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. These incentives have contributed to VPAS driving significant improvements in patient access to clinically and cost-effective medicines, whilst ensuring sustainable and predictable spend growth for the National Health Service and industry during a period of economic uncertainty.

HOME OFFICE■ **Asylum****Seema Malhotra:**[\[163816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 March 2023 to Question 160288 on Asylum, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of trends in the number of people claiming asylum after arriving on land-based transport.

Robert Jenrick:

On 7 March 2023 the Government introduced the new Illegal Migration Bill in Parliament. The new legislation will build on and strengthen measures in the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 to tackle illegal migration. The purpose of the legislation is to deter people from making dangerous and unnecessary journeys to the UK and break the model of criminals exploiting people by facilitating this route.

Anyone who enters or arrives in the UK illegally having passed through a safe country, including those who arrive clandestinely through land-based transport, will be subject to the duty.

Ellie Reeves:[\[165406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what percentage of asylum applications were (a) granted, (b) refused, (c) withdrawn and (d) pending a decision in each year since 2010.

Ellie Reeves:[\[165407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for asylum were submitted in each of the last five years; and how many decisions have been reached in each of those years.

Ellie Reeves:[\[165408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what percentage of asylum applications received in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022 have had a decisions.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications raised can be found in table Asy_D01, data on initial decisions made on asylum applications can be found in table Asy_D02, and data on outcomes of asylum applications raised in specific years can be found in table Asy_D04 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks.

For table Asy_D01 and Asy_D02, the latest data relate to the year ending December 2022. Data for the year ending March 2023 will be published on 25 May 2023.

For table Asy_D04, the latest available data is for 2021, and data are accurate as of June 2022. An update to this table will be published in August 2023, which will include data for 2022.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Asylum: Albania

Hilary Benn: **[165222]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people arrived in the UK from Albania in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many people were returned to Albania in that period.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on visas granted to Albanian nationals are published in table Vis_D02 of the '[Entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed datasets](#)'.

Data on irregular arrivals are published in the '[Irregular Migration to the UK release](#)'. Data on detected irregular arrivals of Albanian nationals are published in table Irr_D01 of the '[Irregular Migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)'.

Please note that the published Home Office entry clearance visa statistics show the number of visa applications and outcomes, but this may not necessarily equal the total number of individuals arriving in the UK on visas (for example, some visas may be unused, or some individuals may apply for more than one visa in a given period). The data also shows visas for Albanian nationals, but does not show if they have applied from Albania.

Data on returns are published in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on returns by destination are published in table Ret_D02 of the '[Returns detailed datasets](#)'.

Further information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data relates to the end of December 2022, except for Returns which are to the end of September 2022.

■ Asylum: Children

Seema Malhotra: **[163817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2023 to Question 156970 on Asylum: Children, whether she plans to meet the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

Robert Jenrick:

There are no planned meetings between the Home Secretary and UNHCR in the diary at the moment.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[163818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 March 2023 to Question 156969 on Asylum: Children, what plans her Department has to publish the operational risk registers.

Robert Jenrick:

We currently have no plans to publish the operational risk register.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[165190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her oral contribution to the second reading debate on the Illegal Migration Bill on 14 March 2023, Official Report, Column 580, what steps she is taking to ensure that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are removed from the UK only (a) for the purposes of family reunion and (b) in other limited circumstances.

Robert Jenrick:

The Illegal Migration Bill provides the Home Secretary with a legal duty to remove people who have entered the UK illegally.

The Secretary of State is not required to make arrangements to remove an unaccompanied child from the UK until they turn 18 years old. As a matter of current policy, this power will only be exercised in very limited circumstances ahead of them reaching adulthood, such as for the purposes of family reunion or where removal is to a safe country of origin.

Unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK illegally will be provided with the necessary accommodation and support but they will not be able to settle in the UK.

Taking these measures will send a clear message that children cannot be exploited and forced into crossing the Channel in small boats for the purpose of starting a new life in the UK.

The only way to come to the UK for protection will be through safe and legal routes. This will take power out of the hands of the criminal gangs and protect vulnerable people, including children.

■ Asylum: Families

Rachael Maskell:

[\[162236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to provide safe routes for family reunification.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government already provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its refugee family reunion policy. This allows the partner and children of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Our family reunion policy has reunited many refugees with their family members; since 2015 more than 44,659 family reunion visas have been granted.

Our policy also makes clear that there is discretion to grant visas outside the Immigration Rules, which caters for extended family members where there are compelling compassionate factors or relevant factors under Article 8 of European Convention on Human Rights. In addition, there are separate provisions in the Rules such as paragraph 319X to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances.

■ **Dungavel House Immigration Removal Centre**

Neale Hanvey: [\[165451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) the Scottish government, (b) local authorities and (c) other relevant stakeholders on the operation of the Dungavel House immigration removal centre.

Neale Hanvey: [\[165456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Scottish Government has requested that responsibility for the immigration detention facility at Dungavel be devolved.

Robert Jenrick:

Contact takes place between Dungavel House IRC and relevant local stakeholders, as necessary, on issues relating to the day to day running of the centre. Although immigration is not a devolved matter, we will keep the Scottish Government informed of any significant changes to the operation of this IRC.

The Annual Budget for Dungavel House IRC forms part of the budget for the wider detention estate and is not disaggregated. Published figures for the average cost of a detention bed per day can be found at the link: Immigration Enforcement data: Q4 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Home Office publishes statistics on people entering and leaving immigration detention in the 'Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release'. The number of people entering detention each quarter are in table Det_D01 of the 'Detention detailed datasets', where the data can be broken down by age and first place of detention. The number of people leaving detention each quarter are in table Det_D03 of the 'Detention detailed datasets', where the data can be broken down by length of detention.

The Home Office does not publish by place of detention: asylum-related detentions, length of detention of people leaving detention, or a breakdown of pregnant women detained.

However, data on the total number of asylum-related detentions each year is in table Det_01 and data on the total number leaving detention by place of detention is in table Det_04c of the 'Detention summary tables'. The latest data relate to the end of December 2022.

Data on the total number of pregnant women detained in the immigration detention estate each quarter is published in table PWD_01 of the 'Immigration Enforcement

data: Q4 2022'. This data is only available from July 2016 and goes up to the end of September 2022. For data prior to 2010, see the archived Detention tables.

■ Members: Correspondence

Dan Carden: [\[165393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the letter of 9 February 2023 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton on engagement with Hillsborough families.

Chris Philp:

I refer the Hon. Member to my response to Question 147411 issued on 27 February 2023: [Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#).

■ Passports

Derek Thomas: [\[161362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken to (a) issue or renew passports, (b) arrange appointments to verify applicants' identity and (c) respond to correspondence from hon. Members on the time taken to process applications.

Robert Jenrick:

HM Passport Office has processed more than 1.67 million UK standard applications across January and February with a total printed output of 1.86 million. Over 99.5% of standard UK applications processed within ten weeks and 95.5% within 3 weeks.

■ Radicalism

Cat Smith: [\[161324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to monitor the activities of (a) Patriotic Alternative and (b) other far-right groups relating to refugees.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government remains committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society. This includes using existing mechanisms to analyse, prevent and disrupt the spread of ideologies that can lead to community division.

Rights to peaceful protest do not extend to violent or threatening behaviour and the police have powers to deal with any such acts and protect the public.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Deidre Brock: [\[162216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) evacuating children without their parents and (b) other

instances of families being separated during their evacuation from Afghanistan under Operation Pitting on those people.

Robert Jenrick:

Following the evacuation of Kabul any children who we became aware of in the UK, that were not with their parents, have been dealt with on a case-by-case basis. When this has happened, we work in close collaboration with social services and the relevant local authority.

The Government has provided, and it continues to provide, a warm welcome to Afghans arriving in the UK. This includes the provision of accommodation, food, integration support, English lessons, and healthcare.

The situation in Afghanistan remains very complex and presents significant challenges, including how those who are eligible for resettlement in the UK can leave the country. This includes the eligible family members of those who arrived during Operation Pitting.

For those evacuated from Afghanistan and resettled under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), without their immediate family members, further information will be made available in due course about options for reuniting with them.

Otherwise, anyone without refugee status - including those resettled under ACRS Pathway 1 and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) - wishing to bring family members would need to apply through the regular family visa route under Appendix FM of the Immigration Rules.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[162232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to (a) ensure that Afghan families are not living in hotels by August 2023 and (b) help integrated those families into their local communities.

Robert Jenrick:

Whilst hotels do not provide a long-term solution, they do offer safe, secure and clean accommodation. We are working intensively across government, and in partnership with c.350 local authorities across the country to both bring down the number of people in bridging hotels and move families into more sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible so they can put down permanent roots.

The UK is currently experiencing a shortage of local housing accommodation for all, and we acknowledge that sourcing appropriate accommodation for Afghan families can be a complex process due to the diverse needs of those we are supporting. However, this government remains committed to helping each and every Afghan family resettling in the UK into permanent accommodation as soon as possible.

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

funding of £20,520 per person, over three years, for each Afghan family they resettle and provide full integration support to for this duration.

Local authorities and health partners who resettle families currently receive up to £4,500 per child for education, £850 for English language provision for adults requiring this support and £2,600 for healthcare.

JUSTICE

■ Administration of Justice: Fees and Charges

Julian Knight:

[\[163804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support his Department is providing to people on low-incomes to help them pay for court and tribunal fees.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice has a fee remission scheme in place called Help with Fees for court and tribunal users who are on low incomes and cannot reasonably afford a court or tribunal fee. This scheme considers several factors including the applicant's income, savings, size of the fee and whether they are receiving any benefits.

Successful applicants may receive a partial or total remission. In the year 2021/22 alone, the scheme provided £81 million in financial help to thousands of applicants. Additionally, if an applicant does not qualify for Help with Fees, they may ask court or tribunal staff to exercise the Lord Chancellor's exceptional power to remit fees. This ensures no one is denied access to justice because they cannot reasonably afford a court or tribunal fee.

Furthermore, on 7 March 2023, we launched a public consultation proposing a series of reforms to make the Help with Fees scheme more generous and provide better targeted support for those on lower incomes. Among the key proposals are plans to increase the income thresholds, provide higher child allowances to better support families, and raise the minimum capital threshold for determining eligibility. The consultation will close on 30 May 2023

■ Asylum: Appeals

Ellie Reeves:

[\[165403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases were listed for First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) hearings in each week of the last 18 months.

Ellie Reeves:

[\[165404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases are awaiting First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) hearings; and how many of those types of cases have been awaiting that type of hearing in each of the last 18 months.

Ellie Reeves: [165405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average waiting time is for a First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) hearing.

Mike Freer:

Information on the number of cases which are listed for hearing weekly in the First-tier Tribunal (Asylum Support) (FtT (AS)) is not held. This information is only held monthly.

All valid appeals received in the FtT (AS) in the period July 2021 – December 2022 (the latest 18 month period for which published data are available), have been determined or withdrawn. The average waiting time for a valid Asylum Support appeal to be determined is 14 days.

■ Bail

Steve Reed: [165355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were bailed having been charged with (a) serious sexual offences, (b) rape, (c) murder, (d) aggravated burglary, (e) robbery and (f) violence against the person by ethnicity in each calendar year since 1 January 2018.

Steve Reed: [165356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of how many people of what ethnicity were bailed after being charged with (a) serious sexual offences and (b) rape in in each year since 2018.

Steve Reed: [165357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of how many people of what ethnicity were bailed after being charged with (a) murder and (b) aggravated burglary in each year since 2018.

Steve Reed: [165358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of how many people of what ethnicity were bailed after being charged with (a) robbery and (b) violence against the person in each year since 2018.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on defendants' remand status at the police and magistrates' court stage in the [Remands: Magistrates' court data tool](#), and at the Crown Court stage in the [Remands: Crown court data tool](#).

■ Open Prisons

Kim Johnson: [162321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times he has (a) accepted and (b) not accepted a Parole Board recommendation of prisoner progression to the Category D estate in each of the last four quarters.

Damian Hinds:

The Secretary of State (or an official with delegated responsibility) will accept a recommendation from the Parole Board to approve an indeterminate sentenced prisoner (ISP) for open conditions, only where all criteria of the policy has been met. The policy and guidance were updated in June 2022. When considering whether to accept Parole Board recommendations for open conditions, each case is considered on its own merits, against the terms of the policy, taking into account all of the information provided. A period in open conditions is not essential in order for the Parole Board to direct release and time in open conditions must not be at the expense of public protection. The Prison Service operates progression regimes in four closed prisons which provide an alternative for prisoners unsuitable for open conditions. These allow prisoners to demonstrate the progress they have made in custody while minimising the risk to the public.

Below is a breakdown of how many times the Secretary of State for Justice has accepted and not accepted the Parole Board's recommendation:

2022	ACCEPTED	NOT ACCEPTED
Q1	80	8
Q2	1	33
Q3	5	58
Q4	13	63

■ Prison Sentences

Kim Johnson: [\[162322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving an IPP sentence have been recalled to prison having committed no further crime in each of the last four quarters.

Kim Johnson: [\[162323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people under an IPP licence are eligible to have the Parole Board consider whether to lift their licence.

Kim Johnson: [\[162324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people under an IPP licence have (a) successfully and (b) unsuccessfully applied to have their licence lifted in each of the last four quarters.

Kim Johnson: [\[162325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people serving an IPP sentence have been recalled to prison less than five years following their first release.

Kim Johnson:

[\[162326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people serving an IPP sentence are currently in a secure hospital.

Damian Hinds:

The power to recall is a vital public protection measure and all individuals supervised under licence in the community are liable to recall to prison if they fail to comply with their licence conditions. Where IPP offenders are recalled, it is because they present an assessed risk of serious harm to the public and the controls available are no longer sufficient to keep the public safe.

The Government is committed to the protection of the public and the effective management of offenders. Prisoners serving indeterminate sentences who have completed their tariff will be released only when the Parole Board concludes that it is no longer necessary on the grounds of public protection for them to remain confined.

The IPP Action Plan remains the route by which IPP offenders can be supported to progress towards safe release. As per the Government's response to the Justice Select Committee's report on the IPP sentence, work to refresh the Action Plan is already underway.

PQ132622

The following table shows the number of people serving an IPP sentence who have been recalled to prison who have not committed a further a crime in the last four available quarters up to end September 2022, in England and Wales:

RECALLED FOR REASONS NOT INCLUDING A FURTHER CRIMINAL CHARGE

Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022
110	122	115	111

PQ132623

As of 30 September 2022, there were 502 people under an IPP licence who are eligible to have the Parole Board consider lifting their licence, in England and Wales.

PQ132624

The following table shows the number of people under an IPP licence who have a) had their licence successfully terminated and b) were unsuccessful following referral, in England and Wales, from January to December 2022:

LICENCE TERMINATION		
OUTCOMES	NUMBER	PROPORTION OF ALL OUTCOMES
Successful	93	47%
Unsuccessful	103	53%

PQ132625

As of 30 September 2022, out of 4847 IPP offenders who have ever been released, 2463 were recalled less than five years after their first release, in England and Wales.

PQ132626

As of 31 December 2021, there were 292 people serving an IPP sentence in a secure hospital, in England and Wales. This was 9% of the total IPP population at this time.

Notes for all figures in the above tables and figures:

1. Numbers are subject to revision as more data become available.
2. The figures in these tables have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. Data has been supplied for as many of the requested years as it is possible to provide within cost limits; earlier years may not be available due to changes in recording over time

■ Prisons: Staff

Grahame Morris: [\[165288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison staff are excluded from working in a prison by (a) role and (b) category of exclusion as of 14 March 2023.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Probate

Catherine West: [\[162251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the standard waiting time is for a grant of probate; and what steps he is taking to reduce that waiting time.

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

■ Business Premises: Change of Use

Ruth Cadbury: [\[162204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the location of office buildings converted to residential properties under permitted development rights.

Rachel Maclean:

The department publishes data on homes which the permitted development rights have delivered.

The figures can be found at [Housing delivery Table 123](#).

■ Business Rates

Peter Aldous: [\[161281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to introduce the Non-Domestic Rating Bill.

Peter Aldous: [\[161282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to provide Parliament with an opportunity to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny of the future Non-Domestic Rating Bill.

Peter Aldous: [\[161283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what (a) consultations and (b) meetings his Department has held with businesses to discuss the content of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill over the last twelve months.

Lee Rowley:

The Chancellor has published the final report of the Business Rates Review at Autumn Statement 2021. The Government will bring forward legislation to implement the conclusions of the Review as soon as Parliamentary time allows. As part of the review, the Government also undertook a further technical consultation on the implementation of the changes proposed in the review as well as a further consultation on the Digitalisation of Business Rates. The Government response to these consultations was published alongside the Budget on 15 March. The Government maintains an ongoing dialogue with businesses and business groups about taxation.

■ European Regional Development Fund

Caroline Lucas: [\[161263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to provide bridging funding to replace European Regional Development Funding in the 2022-23 financial year; if he will place a copy of his response to the letter of 27 February 2023 on this issue from the University Alliance in the House of Commons Library; and if he will make a statement.

Dehenna Davison:

As previously set out, the UK continues to participate in the EU programmes funded through the current 2014-20 Multiannual Financial Framework (MMF) which includes ERDF. The Withdrawal Agreement ensures that ERDF funding is available until the end of 2023. Total domestic funding will at least match receipts from EU structural funds. We will respond to the letter in due course.

■ Help to Buy Scheme

Sarah Olney: [\[161374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of people who used the Help to Buy scheme (a) defaulted on their loan and (b) have had their home reposessed.

Rachel Maclean:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Stephen Morgan: [\[161398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department has made an assessment of the impact of ESW1 certificates on a leaseholder's ability to (a) sell their home and (b) re-mortgage.

Lee Rowley:

In December 2022 major lenders [committed](#) to lend on properties subject to remediation or where leaseholders held statutory protections under the Building Safety Act, subject to normal lender policy requirements. This is supported by new [valuation guidance](#) from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) which enables the valuation of buildings with building safety issues. We continue to liaise with the industry to understand the progress that is being made.

■ Housing: Construction

Rachael Maskell: [\[162234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to take steps to adjust house building targets to accommodate people granted refugee status.

Rachel Maclean:

When preparing local plans, local authorities should make a realistic assessment of the number of homes their communities need. Local authorities should also assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect this in their planning policies.

Local Government: Elections**Luke Pollard:**[\[163948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in each English region who (a) do not have the photographic ID required to vote in May's local government elections and (b) have signed up for the free voter ID certificate for May's elections.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [151260](#) on 28 February 2023.

Planning: Carbon Emissions**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[162196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to include measures for meeting the Government's net zero targets within the planning regime.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has made clear in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

Private Rented Housing: Key Workers**Fleur Anderson:**[\[161436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether her Department is taking steps to provide support to people who were classed as key workers and have been affected long Covid-19 with threats of eviction.

Rachel Maclean:

Information on where to seek help and support is available on the GOV.UK website at the following [link](#).

Property Development**Rachael Maskell:**[\[165312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will undertake research on (a) funding models for mixed use developments and (b) potential barriers to partial public funding of such developments.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government recognises the need for mixed use developments, which is outlined in our National Planning Policy Framework.

Our Affordable Homes Programme funds a range of tenure types in schemes that are typically mixed-development.

■ Social Rented Housing: Waiting Lists

Sarah Olney: [\[163963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people were on a waiting list for social housing in each of the last five years.

Sarah Olney: [\[163964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many social housing tenants in each region are in rent arrears as of 13 March 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [147125](#) on 27 February 2023.

Local Authority Housing Statistics provide data on the number of households on social housing waiting lists at the following [link](#).

PRIME MINISTER**■ Members: Correspondence**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[165483\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the letter of 14 February 2023 from members of both Houses of Parliament on ongoing human rights concerns in Bahrain.

Rishi Sunak:

A reply has been sent. The United Kingdom opposes human rights abuses and the death penalty in all circumstances and in all countries, and we continue to reiterate this to the Government of Bahrain. Our long-standing bilateral relationship with Bahrain allows us to assist and encourage continuing human rights reforms.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Horizon Europe**

Chi Onwurah: [\[165335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the UK Science and Technology Framework, published on 6 March 2023, for what reason the Science and Technology Framework does not reference association with Horizon Europe.

George Freeman:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 14 March 2023 to Question [158905](#).

■ Innovation and Research**Rachael Maskell:****[162230]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to build international relationships in research, innovation and development to advance UK knowledge and ensure UK skills are recognised in the global research and innovation community.

George Freeman:

The Government aims to place research and innovation at the heart of international bilateral and multilateral relationships, to accelerate the UK's global science and technology superpower ambitions and underpin the UK's position as a global force for good. A key enabler will be the delivery of the new DSIT International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF) with key partner countries which was announced in December 2022 with an initial budget of £119 million.

The Government continues to be ready to work constructively with the EU on a range of issues including UK association to Horizon Europe.

Rachael Maskell:**[162231]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to build a UK investment platform to support the growth of British research, innovation and development.

George Freeman:

The UK Innovation Strategy sets out the Government's vision to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035, placing innovation at the heart of the UK and economic research strategies. It aims to boost private sector investment, creating the right conditions for businesses to innovate and grow.

We are working closely with partners across the innovation ecosystem to deliver that vision. Innovate UK's online innovation hub, for example, will support businesses to search for the wide variety of government support, including investment, across the innovation landscape. We are also mapping the UK innovation clusters to highlight the opportunities across the UK.

■ Innovation and Research: Higher Education**Rachael Maskell:****[162229]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to ensure that universities' plans for research and innovation are integrated into her Department's strategy.

George Freeman:

The Government supports a range of policy interventions to ensure that the knowledge generated in universities has impact in the economy, for example:

Per year, £280m is invested in Higher Education Innovation Funding to support knowledge exchange between universities, business and other partners. Similarly, the Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research programme supports researchers to commercialise their research, and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, funded through Innovate UK, offer early career researchers the opportunity to work with business on innovative projects.

Research England are currently reviewing these programmes, to ensure that they meet the needs of universities, participants and support government objectives.

■ Life Sciences: Manufacturing Industries**Chris Green:**[\[162210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much and what proportion of the £354m funding allocated to life sciences manufacturing has been allocated to life sciences manufacturing projects; and which projects have received this funding.

George Freeman:

This Government recognises the valuable role that life sciences manufacturing plays in the UK economy, as outlined in the Life Sciences Vision published in 2021. Last March, we launched the £60 million Life Sciences Innovative Manufacturing Fund to encourage manufacturing investment in the UK. The fund has received a large number of high-quality applications and we expect to announce the grant recipients shortly. In addition, the UK has supported several other life sciences manufacturing investments including through a grant of up to £15.9m to chemical producer Croda to increase the UK's capacity to manufacture lipid nanoparticles for mRNA vaccines at their site in Leek, and up to £12.3m to support Smith&Nephew's new Advanced Wound Management manufacturing and R&D site near Hull. The Government continues to work with the life sciences industry to support manufacturing investments in the UK.

■ NHS: Drugs**Bill Esterson:**[\[165307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions her Department has had with the Department for Health and Social Care on that Department's consultation on the Statutory Scheme to Control Costs for Branded Medicines.

George Freeman:

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has been in close discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care about the impact of medicines pricing on investment and innovation.

These impacts were considered as part of the consultation process to update the Statutory Scheme for branded medicines pricing. The Government's 2023 Impact Assessment of updates to the Statutory Scheme can be found here:

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

■ Technology: Financial Services

Chi Onwurah:

[\[165334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the impact of volatility in the US financial and venture capital sectors on the UK technology sector.

Paul Scully:

The UK has a world leading tech sector, with a dynamic start-up and scale-up ecosystem, and this week's Budget further demonstrated this government's commitment to its success.

The problems faced by Silicon Valley Bank in the UK stemmed from the actions relating to its parent bank in the US and are not a reflection of any weaknesses in the UK's tech and life sciences sector. My department worked tirelessly with the Treasury to facilitate a solution which saw the successful sale of the UK arm of Silicon Valley Bank to HSBC, protecting deposits at no cost to the taxpayer.

In doing so we have protected our critical tech and life science sectors which not only drive economic growth across the country but also deliver life saving products.

These events show that we need to build a larger, more diverse financing system, where the benefits of investment in high growth firms are available to more investors. The Chancellor will provide a plan in the Autumn Statement later this year to deliver a more diverse financing system for innovative UK companies.

■ Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre: Sales

Chris Green:

[\[162211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much revenue was raised for the Exchequer by the sale of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre; and whether those funds will be reinvested into life sciences manufacturing capabilities in the UK.

George Freeman:

The Vaccine Taskforce granted funding to VMIC Ltd to support development of the Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, a vaccine research and manufacturing facility in Harwell.

In late 2021, VMIC UK Ltd's Board of Directors made the decision to sell the facility through a competitive process. In April 2022, the facility was sold to Catalent. VMIC Ltd subsequently entered a voluntary liquidation.

The courts appointed liquidators to act on behalf of creditors and this process is under way. It is not possible to comment on the question of revenue raised while the liquidation process is ongoing.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

Jim Shannon:

[\[161295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry proposals for a new Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Growth, including an investment facility.

George Freeman:

The Department carefully considers all evidence in the public domain on matters relating to the growth and competitiveness of the UK Life Science sector, including the recent report by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

The Department for Science Innovation and Technology is in close discussions with Ministers from the Department of Health and Social Care, and Department for Business and Trade about the business environment for life sciences and its impact on investment.

Chris Green:

[\[162212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made for the implications for her policies of the recent analysis published by WPI Economics: False Economy Report on the impact of rebate rates under the Voluntary and Statutory Schemes for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access on the level of future R&D investment.

George Freeman:

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

Bill Esterson:

[\[165311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps she is taking to collaborate with the Department for Health and Social Care on negotiations for the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access.

George Freeman:

The Department for Science Innovation and Technology has been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to support planning for the successor to the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS).

The Government is considering how a successor to the VPAS should operate from 2024 onwards and will work with industry to agree a mutually beneficial successor

that supports better patient outcomes, ensures the sustainability of National Health Service (NHS) spend on branded medicines, and enables a strong United Kingdom life sciences industry.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access: Life Sciences

Bill Esterson: [\[165309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the role of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access in improving the UK's standing as a global life sciences hub.

George Freeman:

Supporting the life sciences industry and future innovation is an objective of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS), and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology is working with the Department of Health and Social Care to understand how the VPAS has impacted investment and innovation in the UK.

As reflected in the Life Sciences Vision, the Government is committed to ensuring the growth and competitiveness of the UK life sciences sector. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will continue to work closely with the wide range of public and private sector bodies, and stakeholders across the sector to ensure we deliver the Life Sciences Vision.

TRANSPORT

■ Avanti West Coast: Standards

Virginia Crosbie: [\[165434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to assess the performance of Avanti West Coast in the period since its contract was extended.

Huw Merriman:

The Department's officials meet Avanti West Coast's senior management weekly to review its performance. We are holding Avanti West Coast to account for matters within its control and will continue to use all contractual levers to drive the best outcomes for passengers.

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Charlotte Nichols: [\[162313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the aviation industry achieves net zero by 2050.

Jesse Norman:

DfT published the *Jet Zero Strategy* in 2022, setting out the Government's approach to achieving net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 (or "Jet Zero") for UK aviation. The Strategy focuses on the rapid development of technologies in a way that maintains

the benefits of air travel, whilst maximising the opportunities that decarbonisation brings for the UK.

The Strategy confirmed the Government's aim for the UK to become a world-leader in zero emission flight and to build a thriving sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) industry. The Department's target is to deliver at least 10% SAF in the UK jet fuel mix by 2030. On top of existing programmes and support, the Government has made £165 million available to support industry to accelerate the commercialisation of SAF plants in the UK.

The Government is also supporting the development of new and zero emission aircraft technology through the Aerospace Technology Institute and will provide £685 million of funding over the next three years, an increase of £235 million over the previous period.

The Strategy includes an in-sector CO₂ emissions reduction trajectory from 2025 to 2050, against which the Department will monitor the sector's progress on an annual basis from 2025. The Department has also committed to reviewing the overall Strategy every five years, which will allow the Department to adapt its approach based on progress made.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance

Gavin Newlands:

[\[162220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the monies allocated under City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements are directed toward projects exclusively or mainly concerned with active travel improvements.

Jesse Norman:

Through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) programme the Government has agreed five-year local transport funding settlements for seven eligible city regions from April 2022. CRSTS funding is supporting improvements across a range of transport modes, but based on the plans put forward by mayors, the Government expects at least £700m to be allocated to active travel infrastructure over the period of 2022-25.

Louise Haigh:

[\[162517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding he plans to allocate to active travel from April 2021 to March 2025 from (a) active travel revenue and capital funds, (b) other Departmental programmes and (c) other central Government funding.

Jesse Norman:

Projected funding for active travel over this period was set out in the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) published in July 2022. An update will be published in the next CWIS report to Parliament in due course.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[163970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the level of funding for active travel budgets in the next two financial years on the Government's net zero targets.

Jesse Norman:

The impact of investment in active travel on carbon savings depends on a range of factors which are described within the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. The Department will work with Active Travel England to continue to develop and understand the impact of these factors.

Gill Furniss: [\[165429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 9 March 2023 on Transport Update, whether the projected investment from April 2021 to April 2025 outlined in the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy has been revised.

Jesse Norman:

The Government will provide an update on this in its next report to Parliament on the delivery of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

■ Cycling and Walking: Urban Areas**Gavin Newlands:** [\[162218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the level of funding that will be required by Active Travel England to meet the target to increase the proportion of short journeys in towns and cities that are walked or cycled to 50 per cent by 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The Department's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Active Travel Investment model estimates that a minimum of £5.5 billion is likely to be required to meet this objective.

The actual amount will depend on a wide variety of factors including the highly uncertain long-term impact of the pandemic on walking and cycling stages.

■ Hammersmith Bridge: Repairs and Maintenance**Sarah Olney:** [\[165402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of (a) inflation and (b) wider trends in the cost of (i) concrete, (ii) steel and (iii) other building materials on the cost of Hammersmith Bridge strengthening works.

Mr Richard Holden:

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is the asset owner of Hammersmith Bridge and the project lead for its repair and restoration.

The Department for Transport is providing every assistance to the Council and TfL in helping them resolve the issues the bridge faces.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[163969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 9 March 2023, HCWS625 on Transport Investment, what estimate he has made of the expected cost to the public purse of delays to construction of HS2 Phase 2a between Birmingham and Crewe.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is continuing to work through the implications of the funding settlement with HS2 Ltd. It will take time to work through the costs for rephasing Phase 2a and further details will be provided in due course, including in the parliamentary update report on HS2 in May.

■ Ports: Energy Supply

Stephen Morgan:

[\[162280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the evidence provided by Portsmouth International Port on shore power decarbonisation.

Mr Richard Holden:

By publishing a call for evidence in early 2022, we fulfilled our Transport Decarbonisation Plan commitment to consult on appropriate steps to support and, if needed, mandate the uptake of shore power in the UK. The call for evidence collated views on the costs and benefits of shore power and potential options to enable the rollout of this technology. We published a summary of responses in July 2022. We are using the evidence provided by the 34 respondents, including the Port of Portsmouth to inform our future plans and policies.

■ Portsmouth International Port: Carbon Emissions

Stephen Morgan:

[\[162279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department has provided to Portsmouth International Port to help it meet carbon neutral targets.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport awarded £1,277,626 to the SHAPE UK project as part of the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition Round 1. The project was led by the University of Portsmouth and included Portsmouth International Port. It successfully delivered a demonstration project between September 2021 – March 2022.

In February 2023, the Department launched the Zero Emission Vessels and Infrastructure (ZEVI) competition, which will award £77m of match funding to support

close to commercial clean maritime solutions. We would welcome Portsmouth International Port to bid into the competition, which closes on 19 April 2023. The Department for Transport also engages directly with the sector, including the Port, as part of wider maritime decarbonisation policy work.

■ Railways: North of England

Rachael Maskell: [\[165323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of (a) when the Transpennine Route Upgrade will be completed and (b) the total cost of that project.

Huw Merriman:

Transpennine Route Upgrade is the biggest upgrade project on the conventional railway in the country. The current estimated cost range for the programme is £9.0bn to £11.5bn, a central government commitment that surpasses what was spent on Crossrail in London. The Government has authorised just under £3billion so far. The cost range will be refined later in the year and further announcements will be made in due course.

The programme is being completed in stages, with the first tangible benefits for passengers expected during 2025 with electrification from central Manchester to Stalybridge. We aim to conclude the last elements of the TRU upgrade between 2036-41 but are developing plans to accelerate this to earlier in the 2030s.

■ Railways: Wales

Jonathan Edwards: [\[165308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish his Department's expenditure on Network Rail operations in Wales in each of the last five years.

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail's expenditure for Wales in the past five years (excluding interest, tax and centrally managed costs) was as follows shown in £m:

	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Operating Costs	184	177	163	141	122
Traction electricity, industry costs and rates	18	19	19	19	17
Renewals	222	203	163	161	186
Enhancements	10	16	116	230	177
Total	434	414	460	551	502

The higher level of enhancement costs in earlier years is mostly due to the Great Western Electrification Programme.

■ Railways: York

Rachael Maskell:

[165321]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve rail connectivity between Birmingham and York.

Huw Merriman:

CrossCountry provide hourly services between Birmingham and York via Leeds. From the start of the May 2023 timetable, it is planning to reinstate additional services between Birmingham and York via Doncaster. These will improve connectivity by reintroducing through services between Tyneside, Yorkshire and the Thames Valley and offer a faster journey time between York and Birmingham.

■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Stephen Morgan:

[162281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department will take to (a) prioritise funding for the Zero Emission Vessels and Infrastructure (ZEVI) competition and (b) ensure that this funding is spent on increasing and improving clean maritime technologies.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Zero Emissions and Vessels and Infrastructure Scheme (ZEVI) was launched on 6 February 2023. It is a key scheme of the £206m UK SHORE programme, demonstrating high Technology Readiness Level vessels and infrastructure as part of the pipeline accelerating clean maritime technologies towards commercial readiness. The £77m of match funding under ZEVI is available to fund the construction and set-up of projects until March 2025, with project partners covering all costs of demonstrating in an operational environment for the following three years. This ZEVI funding will be allocated to projects via fair and open competition as run and operated by Innovate UK. Deadline for applications is 19 April 2023 and projects will be scored on the innovation demonstrated within their projects as well as how they will share knowledge and develop the clean maritime market beyond this. Full criteria details can be found [here](#).

TREASURY

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Peter Dowd:

[162206]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to target energy support for people living with (a) arthritis and (b) other medical conditions.

James Cartlidge:

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced that it will provide a further Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 in 2023/24. This was on top of the previous one-off Disability Cost of Living Payment, worth £150, announced in May 2022.

Cost of Living Payments, available to those on means-tested benefits, are also designed to support those on low incomes with the rising cost of living, with a £650 payment announced in May and a £900 payment announced at Autumn Statement 2022.

Disabled people and those with long-term health conditions will also benefit from other forms of Cost of Living support. This includes the Energy Price Guarantee, Energy Bills Support Scheme and the Council Tax rebate.

■ Energy: Taxation**Dan Carden:**[\[161388\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Energy Profits Levy investment allowance on carbon emissions; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) ending those tax reliefs and (b) using the funding for renewable energy projects.

James Cartlidge:

The Energy Profits Levy was introduced in May 2022 to respond to very high prices that meant oil and gas companies are benefiting from exceptional profits. At Autumn Statement 2022, the government confirmed the rate of the levy would rise by a ten percentage points to 35%. This is on top of the 40% tax rate under the permanent regime, bringing the combined headline rate of tax for the sector to 75%, one of the highest amongst comparable North Sea regimes.

The levy was designed to strike the right balance between ensuring a fair tax return for the UK from its natural resources and continuing to encourage investment in the North Sea. The investment allowance within the Energy Profits Levy encourages the oil and gas sector to reinvest its profits to support the economy, jobs, and the UK's energy security. It is right the government has put in place investment incentives to encourage activity to remain in the UK. Abolishing these would be counterproductive: the UK is still reliant on gas for its energy supply; reducing incentives to invest would lead to investors pulling out of the UK, damaging the economy, causing job losses and leading to future lower tax revenue.

■ Government Departments: Consultants**Angela Rayner:**[\[162189\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 10 February 2023 to Question 138357 on Government Consulting Hub, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of Government spend on consultants between (a) May 2020 and May 21, (b) May 2021 and May 2022 and (c) May 2022 to date.

James Cartlidge:

Information regarding Government spend on consultants is not held centrally by HM Treasury.

■ Inheritance Tax**Andrew Selous:**[\[162139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the timeliness with which HMRC conclude their assessment of inheritance tax due on estates.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC is currently processing IHT form IHT400 within their agreed service level standards of 80 per cent within 15 working days.

When HMRC have processed the IHT400, if the appropriate amount of tax has been paid, they send the IHT421 to HMCTS. At the same time, a letter is also sent to customers which provides a date by which they will hear from HMRC if a compliance check needs to be undertaken. This date provided will be 12 weeks from the date the tax calculation letter was issued and does not impact the process being undertaken separately by the UK Court Services.

If HMRC has not contacted the customer by the 12 weeks date provided, then HMRC does not have any further questions to ask about the information and values provided in the IHT form and no compliance check will be undertaken.

■ Silicon Valley Bank UK**Chi Onwurah:**[\[165299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether any (a) team in his Department, (b) Executive agency and (c) other public body had responsibility for assessing the (i) sustainability and (ii) viability of Silicon Valley Bank's (A) capital structure and (B) exposure to risk when Silicon Valley Bank UK was granted a banking licence; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Griffith:

Authorisation decisions are for the independent regulators to comment on. The Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) is responsible for the supervision of financial institutions operating in the UK.

■ Small Businesses: Loans**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**[\[162498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prudential Regulation Authority's Consultation, CP 16/22, on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential impact of the SME lending proposals on banks based in the (a) EU and (b) UK.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

[\[162499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Prudential Regulation Authority Consultation CP 16/22 on the Implementation of the Basel 3.1 standards, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proposals for SME lending on the balance of risk on (a) secured and (b) unsecured loans.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is currently consulting on its proposals for Basel 3.1. This includes its proposals for deleting retained EU law including that which relates to the prudential rules on secured and unsecured SME lending. The detailed implementation of the Basel package however, has been delegated to the UK's expert regulator, the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA). The PRA is also consulting and has requested information from firms on specific measures including those relating to SME lending.

The Government continues to work with the PRA and businesses closely to understand the impact of the proposed changes, including for competitiveness with the EU and the impact on SME lending. This includes monitoring the EU's proposals, which also have not yet been finalised.

WALES

■ High Speed 2 Line: North Wales

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[165435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the timing of the construction of HS2 between Birmingham and Crewe on the economy of north Wales.

David T C Davies:

I have regular discussions with my Cabinet colleagues on a range of transport matters relating to Wales, including HS2.

The Department for Transport expects to re-phase construction of Phase 2a (West Midlands to Crewe) by two years. We aim to deliver high-speed services to Crewe, providing connections with the North Wales Coast Line as soon as possible after accounting for the delay in construction.

The Government will continue to provide updated economic assessments of HS2 at key decision points for the programme, as has been done to date. Updated analysis will consider any impacts caused by inflationary and cost pressures.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Bristol City Council: Wheelchairs

Darren Jones:

[\[151367\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Government has provided funding to Bristol City Council to meet wheelchair accessibility requirements in the National Disability Strategy.

Stuart Andrew:

We are fully committed to supporting disabled people in the UK through creating more opportunities, protecting their rights and ensuring they fully benefit from, and can contribute to, every aspect of our society.

Local Authority funding is a matter for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

■ Business Premises: Disability

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[151374\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the process for reporting violations of disabled access legislation in commercial properties.

Stuart Andrew:

The Equality Act 2010 provides strong protection for disabled users of commercial premises and effective enforcement mechanisms where the owners or managers of such buildings fail in their duty to make reasonable adjustments such as the installation of a ramp for wheelchair access.

In common with other civil law, where alleged violations of the Act have occurred with no resolution, reporting and enforcement is for the individual or their representative at the County Court or Sheriff's Court in Scotland, both having effective remedial powers in cases that are proven.

■ Disability Unit: Staff

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[161350\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 07 March to Question 153886 on Disability Unit: Staff, what proportion of staff (a) did not declare their disability status and (b) declared that they would prefer not to say.

Maria Caulfield:

12% of staff in the Disability Unit did not declare their disability status (as at 28th February 2023).

We are unable to provide details of the proportion of staff who declared they would prefer not to disclose their disability status, because the small numbers involved could permit the identification of individuals.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cost of Living Payments: Migrants

Fleur Anderson:

[\[162308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for cost of living support schemes to include people with no recourse to public funds.

Mims Davies:

The Government has provided a wide range of measures to support with the cost of living in 22/23, including the Energy Bill Support Scheme and the Energy Price Guarantee which are available to all households with a domestic electricity bill. To ensure stability and certainty for households we are providing further cost of living support in 2023/24, including maintaining the Energy Price Guarantee at £2,500 for a further three months, from April 2023.

There is a general expectation that people wishing to come to the UK can maintain themselves and their families until they are settled here. Those granted immigration leave with a No Recourse to Public Funds condition are not therefore eligible for means-tested benefits or the Cost of Living Payment. However, we are increasing the National Living Wage (NLW) by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour for workers aged 23 and over, from 1 April 2023 for those individuals who have a right to work.

Local Authorities can provide a basic safety net support to an individual, regardless of their immigration status, if there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution, for example if:

- there are community care needs
- they have serious health problems
- there is a risk to a child's wellbeing

Local Authorities must use their judgement to decide what legal powers and funding can be used to support individuals who are ineligible for public funds or statutory housing assistance.

■ Employment

Alison McGovern:

[\[162174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans to publish his Department's review into workforce progression.

Guy Opperman:

The Spring Budget focused on the key groups considered in the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions review into workforce participation, including: disabled people and those with health conditions, the over-50s, parents and carers, people who are on UC and working fewer than full time hours.

The Spring Budget and Health and Disability White Paper set out a significant and wide-ranging package of measures designed to support people to enter work, increase their working hours and extend their working lives.

DWP Budget measures represent an investment of £3.5bn over 5 years to boost workforce participation.

■ Employment Data Lab

Alison McGovern:

[\[163847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2023 to Question 133981 on Employment Data Lab, when he plans to publish the two further evaluations.

Guy Opperman:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ [142681](#) on 24 February 2023.

■ Employment Schemes

Dan Jarvis:

[\[165279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps his Department is taking to work with (a) mayoral combined and (b) local authorities on locally-led initiatives on reducing unemployment.

Guy Opperman:

DWP already recognises the importance of a place-based approach in reducing unemployment and values the knowledge and expertise of local government. Our job centres work with them all the time.

■ Migrants: Finance

Fleur Anderson:

[\[162309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment the Government has made of the impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds policy on (a) child poverty and (b) child health inequalities.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[162310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment with his Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds policy on levels of (a) poverty and (b) inequality.

Mims Davies:

The Department has made no recent assessments, and it has no plans to do so in the future.

DWP has no powers to award public funds benefits to an individual whose Home Office immigration status restricts access to public funds. Those on certain visa routes, including the family and human rights routes, can apply, for free, to have public funds access restrictions lifted if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, if the

welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of “children in need” in their area. Support provided to a child by local authorities under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is not dependent on the immigration status of the child or their parent(s). In addition, individuals with no recourse to public funds can also benefit from the Household Support Fund and may be able to receive support in limited circumstances, as determined by Local Authorities.

■ National Insurance Credits

Rachael Maskell:

[159003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the (a) cost and (b) requirement on staff hours of manually correcting National Insurance contributions records for people within four months of state pension age because the universal credit system has not transferred National Insurance class 3 credits electronically to HMRC in the last twelve months.

Guy Opperman:

No estimate has been made. The Department has been working with HMRC to resolve this issue. We expect NI records will be fully updated by HMRC over the course of 2023/24, any State Pension entitlement will be reassessed, and any underpayment addressed accordingly.

■ Pensioners: Gloucester

Richard Graham:

[165267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners received (a) a winter fuel payment and (b) cost of living support in Gloucester constituency in 2022-23.

Laura Trott:

The number of Winter Fuel Payments received in Gloucester constituency in winter 2021 to 2022 was 18,468. Statistics for the Winter of 2022 to 2023 will be published in September 2023. A full breakdown of Winter Fuel Payment statistics can be found here: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2020 to 2021 and winter 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2020-to-2021-and-winter-2021-to-2022).

The Department for Work and Pensions has published management information on the total number of Pensioner Cost of Living Payments made. The information can be found here: [Pensioner Cost of Living Payment management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pensioner-cost-of-living-payment-management-information)

The department has also published management information on the number of means-tested benefits and disability Cost of Living payments made. The information can be found here [Cost of Living Payment management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cost-of-living-payment-management-information)

In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, the number of Cost of Living Payments made in specific constituencies is the subject of an upcoming statistical release, and cannot be released before that publication is ready, subject to usual quality assurance.

■ Pensions: Gender

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[165372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the gender pension gap.

Laura Trott:

We are working across government to better understand the challenge and agree a definition of the gender pensions gap. This will allow us to monitor progress and begin reporting on the issue.

Through Automatic Enrolment and the new State Pension, we are enabling more women to build up pension provision in their own right – reducing historic inequalities in the pensions system.

Under the new State Pension over three million women stand to receive an average of £550 more per year by 2030. State pension outcomes are expected to equalise for men and women by the early 2040s, over a decade earlier than they would have under the old system.

Automatic Enrolment has increased the number of women contributing to a workplace pension. We are taking steps to further increase women's participation in workplace pensions.

We remain committed to implementing the measures recommended in the 2017 review of Automatic Enrolment in the mid 2020s. These will disproportionately benefit lower earners, including people working in multiple low-paid part time jobs, who are predominantly women. We are supporting Jonathan Gullis MP's Private Member's Bill which passed committee stage on Wednesday 15 March, as this presents an immediate route for the legislative powers to expand the Automatic Enrolment framework in the current Parliamentary session.

■ Social Security Benefits

David Linden:

[\[165390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what matters were assessed by the latest statutory review of the benefit cap levels as set out in Section 96A subsection (3) paragraph (b) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State took into account evidence and statistics held in the department, the views of stakeholders, the wider economic climate, public funds and the circumstances of capped households were also considered. At the new levels the cap will continue to incentivise work, particularly at a time of high vacancies.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Amy Callaghan: [\[161424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of not uplifting legacy benefits on the trends in the level of relative poverty of people with a disability in each constituency in Scotland.

Guy Opperman:

It is not possible to do this, as DWP does not collect this constituency data.

■ State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance Contributions

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[162296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what process is being used to manually correct the NI records for current or former Universal Credit claimants nearing State Pension age; and what steps are being taken to ensure no individuals become eligible to claim their State Pension without their records having been corrected.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 14 March 2023]: The Department has been working with HMRC to resolve this issue. We expect NI records will be fully updated by HMRC over the course of 2023/24, any State Pension entitlement will be reassessed, and any underpayment addressed accordingly.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Sarah Olney: [\[161372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will provide a breakdown of the total amount of money given out in Support for Mortgage Interest by (a) Parliamentary Constituency and (b) Local Authority.

Mims Davies:

Regional breakdowns are published quarterly and are available [here](#).

■ Universal Credit: Lone Parents

Amy Callaghan: [\[161420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to make it his policy to pay under 25s who are single parents the adult rate of benefits when they are claiming Universal Credit.

Guy Opperman:

Universal Credit provides those who are under 25 with lower rates than those age 25 and over. This is to reflect the fact that these claimants are more likely to live in someone else's household and have lower living costs. It also reflects the lower wages that younger workers typically receive. However, it is acknowledged that some claimants under 25 do live independently, which is why Universal Credit includes separate elements to provide support to claimants for these additional costs, such as

housing costs. These additional amounts are provided to claimants at the same level irrespective of age.

■ Universal Credit: National Insurance Credits

Rachael Maskell:

[\[160319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the work being undertaken by his Department to find a solution to automatically transfer Class 3 National Insurance Credits to the electronic National Insurance Recording System for Universal Credit claimants, how many Universal Credit claimants have paid voluntary national insurance contributions to cover their time claiming Universal Credit as a result of the fact that at present those credits are not being automatically transferred to that system.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is not responsible for the administration of voluntary National Insurance Contributions. HMRC have responsibility for this area.

■ Universal Credit: Telephone Services

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[162509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls were made to the Universal Credit hotline in the last month; how many of those calls were answered; and what the average waiting time was for a call to be answered.

Guy Opperman:

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

Please find data below which shows calls to Universal Credit, offered, answered and average speed of answer for the month of February.

MONTH	TELEPHONY SERVICE LINE	CALLS OFFERED	CALLS ANSWERED	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER (HH:MM:SS)
Feb	Universal Credit	1,164,493	1,115,730	0:01:49

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory / Chagos Archipelago**

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly): [\[HCWS645\]](#)

Since the Written Ministerial Statement made on 3 November 2022, the UK and Mauritius have held constructive negotiations on 23 to 24 November 2022, 11 to 12 January 2023 and 23 to 24 February 2023 on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) / Chagos Archipelago. These discussions have built understanding between the two sides, and covered issues relating to ensuring the continued effective operation of the joint UK/US military base on Diego Garcia; resettlement of the former inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago; strengthening our cooperation on a range of issues such as environmental and marine protection, improving security and tackling illegal activities in the region.

As agreed at the outset of negotiations, the UK and Mauritius have taken stock of negotiations and agreed next steps. The Prime Minister, my Rt Hon Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) and Prime Minister Jugnauth spoke on 14 February. The Prime Ministers welcomed the progress to date and agreed to continue negotiations, with a view to arriving at an agreement in the coming months.

JUSTICE

■ **Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review - Publication and Interim Response**

Deputy Prime Minister Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS643\]](#)

Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government and we are committed to ensuring that the most serious offenders spend longer in prison. Women should feel safe in their own home and our sentencing framework must reflect the seriousness of violence and abuse committed by those closest to them.

The Government commissioned an independent expert, Clare Wade KC, to review sentencing in domestic homicide cases to establish whether current law and sentencing guidelines are fit for purpose and identify options for reform.

Today, I am publishing Ms Wade KC's Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review (the 'Wade Review') and announcing a package of proposed reforms to change the law so that sentencing reflects the seriousness of domestic homicides. The published review can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-homicide-sentencing-review>.

The Wade Review makes a number of other recommendations and the government's position will be outlined in a full response to be published before the summer recess. The measures announced today demonstrate our commitment to delivering tougher

sentences for the perpetrators of these horrific crimes and allow for necessary legislation to be introduced as soon as possible. All recommendations in the review and the measures announced today apply to England and Wales.

We will increase sentences for murderers with a history of controlling or coercive behaviour against the victim.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 introduced the criminal offence of controlling or coercive behaviour. Controlling or coercive behaviour can comprise economic, emotional or psychological abuse. It does not relate to a single incident, but a purposeful pattern of behaviour over time. Controlling or coercive behaviour by the perpetrator towards the victim was identified in 51% of the murder cases analysed for this Review.

Despite around a quarter of all homicides being classed as domestic, the legislation which sets out the sentencing framework for murder does not currently specifically account for the abuse that the victims in these cases often experience before death.

The review recommends that a history of coercive or controlling behaviour should be added to the statutory aggravating factors to murder. We will introduce legislation to make this change as soon as possible to ensure abuse experienced before death is properly considered and serious offenders are kept off our streets for longer.

We will consider further reform by consulting on whether the starting point should be 25 years for murders preceded by controlling or coercive behaviour.

While the addition of a history of coercive or controlling behaviour as a statutory aggravating factor to murder will be an immediate step to increase sentences, we do not rule out further reform to ensure perpetrators are kept behind bars for longer.

We will launch a public consultation this summer seeking views on whether there should be a starting point of 25 years for cases of murder where the perpetrator has controlled or coerced the victim before killing them. The current sentencing framework recognises the particular seriousness of the illegal possession and use of knives in public with a 25-year starting point for murders where a weapon used has been taken to the scene with intent. It is important that this starting point is maintained and therefore we will not be accepting the recommendation made in the Wade Review to disapply it from domestic cases. The sentencing framework must recognise the seriousness of anyone who walks onto our streets with a knife, intending to use it to cause harm. However, the changes announced today will ensure that the framework also recognises the particular seriousness of domestic murder, and this consultation will ensure all reform options have been fully explored.

We will make 'overkill' a statutory aggravating factor in the sentencing framework for murder.

Overkill is defined in the Wade Review and wider literature as the use of excessive or gratuitous violence, beyond that necessary to kill. It amounts to violation of the body and causes intense distress to the families of victims. Overkill is prevalent in domestic murders and was identified in 60% of the cases analysed for this Review.

The Wade Review recommends that overkill should be added to the statutory aggravating factors to murder. This would mean that a judge *must* consider increasing an offender's minimum custodial term where overkill has occurred. We will introduce legislation to make this change as soon as possible. It will ensure that the horror of overkill is recognised in statute and that the anguish it causes the families of victims is taken into account when sentencing such cases.

Building on our ban of the 'rough sex defence' in the Domestic Abuse Act, we want to see longer sentences for perpetrators of so-called rough sex manslaughter. We are requesting that the Sentencing Council update their guidelines and will keep under review the need for legislation.

The government is clear the 'rough sex defence' is not recognised in law as a person is legally unable to consent to "serious harm", including where it results in death. However, there continues to be concern about apparent low sentences given in some cases of manslaughter where consent to so-called rough sex is argued.

The review recommends manslaughter sentencing guidelines should be amended to consider the offender highly culpable where death occurs during violence alleged to be consensual during a sexual encounter, and therefore impose a higher sentence.

The production or revision of sentencing guidelines is a matter for the independent Sentencing Council. However, today I will ask the Council, which has a statutory duty to consider my request, to consider revising sentencing guidelines to reflect the recommendation made in the Wade Review. While this is our preferred approach, we will keep legislative options under review to ensure we can deliver reform.

These measures build on our zero-tolerance approach to violence against women and girls by ensuring that sentencing delivers justice for the victims and families.

I am very grateful to Clare Wade KC for her work on this review. I would also like to pay tribute to Carole Gould and Julie Devey for their tireless campaigning after the tragic murders of their daughters, Ellie Gould and Poppy Devey-Waterhouse.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Infrastructure and Environment Consultation Update

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS644\]](#)

Today I have launched two formal consultations on proposals to support measures in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Infrastructure Levy Technical Consultation

Developer contributions play a vital role in mitigating the impacts of new development.

The government wants to improve the current system of developer contributions in England to ensure that communities receive a fairer contribution of the profit that typically accrues to landowners and developers. We want to end protracted negotiation of section

106 agreements which hold up development and create confusion about what infrastructure will be provided and what levels of affordable housing will be delivered.

Through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the Government is seeking powers to create a new Infrastructure Levy in England. Through the Levy we are aiming to create a swifter, more transparent and streamlined system to fund the provision of affordable housing and important infrastructure such as schools, roads, active travel routes and GP surgeries that support new development.

The detailed design of the Levy will be set out in regulations. Today I have launched a technical consultation which will inform the development of the detailed policy that will be set out in those regulations. A further consultation will be carried out on the draft regulations when they are ready and before they are made.

This consultation closes on 9 June 2023.

Environmental Outcome Reports

Over the past 50 years, much of the UK's wildlife-rich habitat has been lost or degraded and many of our once common species are in long-term decline. This is despite efforts to address environmental issues using tools such as the EU derived systems of strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill contains powers to bring forward a new framework for environmental assessment. The proposals are designed to make sure that the value and rigour of environmental assessment is retained and improved, while allowing us to push for better environmental outcomes.

The EU derived processes of assessment are overly bureaucratic and lack transparency. Users have told us reports are inaccessible and cumbersome, with important details lost in the thousands of pages. There is too much uncertainty in the process, and gold-plating driven by fear of legal challenge results in excessive reporting rather than clarity about the genuine effects of development on the environment which should be of concern to the decision-maker and communities. In combination, these issues with process have diluted, and undermined, the original purpose of assessment as a tool for protecting the environment.

In the new system, Parliament will set clear environmental outcomes against which projects must be considered, introducing clarity and certainty for everyone involved in the process. The reforms will streamline and simplify the assessment process and address the issue of risk aversion by being clear what assessment should cover, and how assessment should be carried out.

This consultation sets out how these powers could be used to ensure Environmental Outcome Reports deliver on our ambition to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

Feedback from this consultation will be used to progress the development of the new assessment framework.

I have also taken this opportunity to publish our post-implementation reviews of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, and the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

This consultation closes on 9 June 2023.