



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 September 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 22 September 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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



## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Civil Servants: Training

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47417\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to Section 109(4) of the Equality Act 2010, whether she has had discussions with (a) human resources and (b) employment law experts in her Department on the implications for her Department's liability to Section 109 proceedings of removing mandatory training for civil service staff regarding their obligations under that Act.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

There has been no change to the mandatory training for civil servants at the Attorney General's Office.

#### ■ Crown Prosecution Service: Consultants

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[40932\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Crown Prosecution Service has spent on external consultants in each of the last five years; and if she will publish a breakdown of the (a) amount paid to each consultancy contracted, (b) name of each consultancy contracted and (c) specific matters on which they were consulted.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The spend on externally contracted consultancy services for CPS in each of the last five years, as recorded in the CPS' published accounts, is shown in the table below:

2020/21	2019/21	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
£219,000	£64,000	£0	£0	£0

Details of all Government contracts awarded from 2016 above £10,000 and £25,000 in the wider public sector are in the public domain and published on [Contracts Finder](#).

Each award notice provides information on the name of the supplier, value of the contract, its purpose and information on the type of awarding procedure used.

Government departments, their individual agencies and Arm's Length Bodies are required to publish all spend against individual suppliers above £25,000 on [GOV.UK](#).

#### ■ Government Legal Department: Consultants

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[40933\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Government Legal Department has spent on external consultants in each of the last five years; and if she will publish a breakdown of the (a) amount paid to each consultancy contracted, (b) name of each consultancy contracted and (c) specific matters on which they were consulted.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The Government Legal Department (GLD) spent the following amounts on external consultants over the past five financial years. This information is available in the public domain and is as follows:

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
£79,000	£101,000	£144,000	£111,000	£342,000

The breakdown of this consultancy spending by each firm contracted is as follows:

NAME OF CONSULTANCY FIRM	AMOUNT PAID TO FIRM	SPECIFIC MATTERS ON WHICH THEY WERE CONSULTED
North Highland	£80,000	Productivity improvements in legal activity delivery
Quo Imus Ltd	£20,000	Work on a review of shared service communications across AGO, GLD and HMCPsi
AMEO Professional Services Ltd	£99,000	Improvements to GLD's recruitment and resourcing strategy and processes
TPX Ltd	£228,000	Improvements to GLD's recruitment and resourcing strategy and processes
Ixia Consultancy Ltd	£40,000	Design work on programme to enhance GLD's Leadership capability
Mike Curtis Reward Solutions Ltd	£137,000	Support to the development of a new pay framework for GLD
Incendium Consulting Ltd	£57,000	Provision of specialist legal market analysis to development of GLD's future accommodation strategy
Alexander Mann Solutions Ltd	£32,000	A review of corporate services capability and design for GLD and its shared service customers

NAME OF CONSULTANCY FIRM	AMOUNT PAID TO FIRM	SPECIFIC MATTERS ON WHICH THEY WERE CONSULTED
Rainmaker Solutions	£79,000	Development of cloud analytical solutions
Various	£5,000	Short-term project and consultancy support

## ■ Iryna Venediktova

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47400\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many people attended lunch at The Cinnamon Club with the former Ukrainian prosecutor general, Ms Iryna Venediktova, on 26 May 2022.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The lunch was attended by eight people.

The then Attorney General hosted a visit for the Ukrainian Prosecutor General and her delegation to discuss how the UK could help ensure accountability for atrocities committed during the ongoing Russian invasion.

The venue was quiet and secure which enabled an open and frank exchange about the situation in Ukraine and the prospects for bringing justice to the victims.

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

## ■ Accountancy: Fines

**Beth Winter:**

[\[49284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to reform the remission of accountancy scheme fines levied by the Financial Reporting Council.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government Response on *Restoring trust in audit and corporate governance*, published in May, set out the Government's intention to legislate for a new statutory enforcement regime for accountants, which would replace the Financial Reporting Council's non-statutory Accountancy Scheme.

Under the new arrangements, all financial sanctions imposed would be paid into HM Treasury's consolidated fund in line with the general principles applying to the treatment of fines or other penalties imposed by public bodies in central government.

**Audit: Reform**

**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[49130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many officials in his Department are working on legislative proposals on audit reform.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

There are 19 BEIS officials working on legislative proposals on reform of audit and corporate governance.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[49131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on audit reform.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government will prepare and publish a draft Bill on audit and corporate governance during this session of Parliament. The Government will bring forward legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

**BioYorkshire: Finance**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[49196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that BioYorkshire receives funding in full.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The North and North Yorkshire devolution deal, published August 2022, states that Innovate UK (IUK) and broader UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will work with the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to formally recognise and seek opportunities to support BioYorkshire.

**Business: Regulation**

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[49619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to reduce the regulatory burden on UK businesses.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[49620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK businesses benefit from the UK leaving the EU.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

Cutting red tape is a central part of the Government's growth policy. The Government is carrying out a major cross-government drive to reform, repeal and replace outdated retained EU law. This will aim to cut £1 billion of red tape for UK businesses, ease regulatory burdens and contribute to the Government's mission to unite and level up the country.

Through a reformed Better Regulation Framework we will foster alternatives to regulation, bear down on costs, and assess the effects of regulation on innovation and competition in order to deliver growth. Regulators will also work collaboratively with businesses to minimise the costs they face.

## ■ **Carbon Emissions: Technology**

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support new low carbon technologies.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government supports the development of new technology throughout its full technology development cycle. This starts with early-stage UKRI funding, progressing into mid to late-stage innovation funding such as the 4-year £1bn Net Zero Innovation Portfolio to demonstrate technology at pilot scale or on-site. This also includes the recently launched ARIA that focusses on high-risk disruptive innovation. Once the technology is ready for first commercial deployment the Government supports deployment through CfD auctions, and programmes like the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund. Finally, to establish an enduring marketplace for new low carbon technology the Government is developing, for example, business models for hydrogen, CCUS and greenhouse gas removal technology.

## ■ **Carers: Leave**

**Wes Streeting:**

[\[49206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to introduce a right for unpaid carers to take up to one week of unpaid leave per year; and when he intends to introduce this right.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government remains committed to supporting unpaid carers in work. Legislation to deliver our commitment to introduce one week of leave for unpaid carers will be brought forward when Parliamentary time allows.

## ■ **Charities and Churches: Energy**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help (a) charities and (b) churches improve their energy efficiency.

**Graham Stuart:**

Charities and non-profit organisations including churches may be entitled to a reduction in VAT, and exclusion from the main rates of the Climate Change Levy, on the energy they use for non-business purposes.

Information on where to find advice and grants can be found on GOV.UK.

## ■ Companies House: Reform

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[49681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with external stakeholders on legislative proposals relating to reform of Companies House in the last six months.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regularly engages with external stakeholders to discuss proposals relating to Companies House reform.

Officials in the Department recently hosted a series of engagement sessions to discuss Companies House reforms within the forthcoming Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill in August and September 2022. These sessions were attended by representatives from law enforcement, financial and business organisations and civil society groups.

## ■ Companies: Registration

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[49680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of raising the company registration fee for Companies House from £12 to £50.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government is keeping the future fees charged by Companies House under review as reforms progress. The Government will seek to ensure that the UK remains an attractive place for business, whilst also protecting the register from fraud and economic crime.

## ■ Construction: Vacancies

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[49151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme on labour supply in the construction sector; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure sufficient labour supply in that sector.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government regularly reviews matters related to construction skills and labour supply. We are working closely with the industry, including representatives from the scaffolding sector, to support increased investment in skills development and to ensure that the industry can attract, retain and develop the skilled workforce it needs for the future.

## ■ Cost of Living

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to reform Ofgem's remit in the context of the cost of living crisis.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is reviewing the recent BEIS Select Committee report and its recommendations on Ofgem's role and will respond to the report soon.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Consultants

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[45817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's Annual report and accounts 2020-21, HC 808, published on 25 November 2021, for what reasons did the amount spent on consultancy increase from £55.7 million in 2019-20 to £137.3 million in 2020-21.

**Dean Russell:**

There are two main reasons for the increase in Department's consultancy spend:

- 1) Covid-19 response, including the Vaccines Task Force and the business support measures.
- 2) Change in approach to identifying consultancy costs disclosed in Department's Annual report and accounts.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: East of England

**Peter Aldous:**

[\[49125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on his policies of trends in the level of population growth in the East of England; and if he will make a statement.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

The Government recognises that the East of England is a fast growing and diverse region. The Department considers a range of factors when making policy decisions and, where population is a factor in those decisions, the latest official population statistics are used.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[47407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's publication of data for spending over £500 using an electronic purchasing card published on 30 June 2022, when he intends to replace the spending

data for May 2020 currently published under the title April 2020 with the correct data for the latter month.

**Dean Russell:**

The correct data for BEIS Government Payment Card spend over £500 in April 2020 has been published on gov.uk and can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1102711/gpc\\_spending\\_over\\_500\\_april\\_2020.csv](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102711/gpc_spending_over_500_april_2020.csv).

The data shows two transactions for the month totalling £2130.36.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Publications**

**Jonathan Reynolds:** [49133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his Department's policy to present information in internal documents and briefings using (a) imperial and (b) metric measurements.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy uses both imperial measures and metric units in internal documents and briefings.

■ **Diseases: Research**

**Kirsten Oswald:** [49702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of researchers in the UK researching (a) dementia, (b) cancer, (c) stroke and (d) coronary heart disease in each of the last 10 years.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Government does not collect this data.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Rented Housing**

**Alex Sobel:** [48487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how customers who pay utilities via a coin meter from which the monies are collected by the landlord will receive the energy discount due to start in October 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

If the landlord has a domestic contract with their energy supplier, they are required to charge tenants no more than they paid suppliers for the energy, under Ofgem's Maximum Resale Price rules ([https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2005/10/11782-resaleupdateoct05\\_3.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2005/10/11782-resaleupdateoct05_3.pdf)). This means that the £400 discount should be passed on to tenants.

If the landlord has a commercial contract with their supplier, further funding will be available to provide equivalent support for energy bills for the small percentage of



domestic energy consumers not reached by the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Government will announce further details shortly.

#### ■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Students**

**Steve McCabe:**

[48210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to ensure that energy bill rebates for student accommodation landlords are evenly distributed amongst their tenants.

**Graham Stuart:**

If landlords have a domestic electricity meter point, they will receive £400 through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Government encourages landlords to pass the payment to tenants to ensure it is reflected in tenants' inclusive charges or separate bill payments. If landlords have a commercial meter, they will not receive the £400 payment.

As per Ofgem's Maximum Resale Price guidance ( [https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2005/10/11782-resaleupdateoct05\\_3.pdf](https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2005/10/11782-resaleupdateoct05_3.pdf) ) there are rules which can protect tenants and ensure they are being charged no more than they should be when they buy the electricity through their landlord.

The Government is working with key stakeholder groups in the private rented sector to help communicate this information.

#### ■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Travellers**

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[R] [48494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2022 to Question 18990 on Energy Bills Rebate, whether he is taking steps to help ensure that Gypsies, Travellers and other nomadic households will receive the £400 energy bills rebate; and if he will hold discussions with voluntary sector organisations on identifying groups that could be excluded from the scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 29 July the Government set out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and confirmed that further funding will be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the small percentage of domestic energy consumers not reached by EBSS. This will include those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier. The government will be announcing details later in the autumn on eligibility and on how these households will receive the £400 payment.

This support will be provided alongside the 'Energy Price Guarantee' which will mean a typical UK household will pay, on average, no more than £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years.

## ■ Energy Intensive Industries: Government Assistance

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[49254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing industry-specific support for energy-intensive industries over autumn 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government remains determined to secure a competitive future for our energy intensive industries (EIs), providing them with extensive support, including over £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs. As part of our British Energy Security Strategy, we recently announced an extension of the EI Compensation Scheme for a further three years and its budget will be more than doubled.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn.

## ■ Energy Performance Certificates

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[49592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of basing the Energy Performance Certificate System on the carbon output of a boiler.

**Graham Stuart:**

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) use Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) as their headline metric, to score the energy performance of buildings based on their estimated running costs. EPCs also produce an Environmental Impact Rating (EIR) based on the estimated CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions of the building.

Recent consultations on policies that use EPCs, eg Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector, sought views on alternative metric options, such as using EIR alongside the EER, to encourage property owners to decarbonise their buildings. The Government is considering a response and will publish in due course.

## ■ Energy Supply

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[49193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a (a) public and (b) not for profit energy provider.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not intend to make such an assessment. Nationalisation will not solve the current challenge of high global fossil fuel prices and the impact this is

having on the cost of energy. Properly regulated markets, which incentivise private capital to invest in the energy system, provide the best outcome for consumers and promote market competition as the best driver of efficiency, innovation and value.

## ■ Energy: Billing

**Colleen Fletcher:**

[48376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the increases in the cost of living on the number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that have fallen into arrears with their energy supplier; and what (i) financial and (ii) other steps his Department is taking to assist households in those areas with rising energy prices.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is aware of the impact increases in the cost of living is having on households across the country. Ofgem's latest data shows the number of domestic customers repaying a debt to their energy supplier at the end of Q1 2022 was 1,029,000 for electricity and 786,000 for gas. <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/search/data-charts?keyword=consumer%20debt>.

From 1 October, a new Energy Price Guarantee will mean a typical UK household will, on average, pay no more than £2,500 a year on its energy bill for the next two years. This is in addition to the support the Government announced earlier this year, which includes the £400 rebate via the Energy Bills Support Scheme, a one-off £300 payment for pensioners, a one-off £650 payment for those on means-tested benefits and a one-off £150 payment for the disabled.

**Catherine West:**

[48464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what data his Department collects on the number of vulnerable people applying to energy providers for emergency credit to pay for energy bills.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ofgem, the energy regulator, reported that in 2020 there were circa 4.1m electricity and 3.3m gas prepayment meter (PPM) customers in the UK.

Ofgem collects data on emergency credit use by the circa 2m smart PPMs for electricity and 1.5m smart gas PPMs at the eight largest suppliers, covering 94% of the market.

Supplier Licence Conditions provide for emergency and out of hours credit by default. Customers can also seek additional 'discretionary credit'. In Q2 2022, 982,000 electricity and 586,000 gas customers on smart PPMs used emergency credit and 369,000 electricity and 175,000 gas customers used discretionary credit.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[48498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his contribution of 5 September 2022, Energy Update statement, Official Report,

column 59, on what date he plans to announce the energy bill support arrangements for people in (a) park homes, (b) multiple dwelling units and (c) other homes without a conventional relationship with an electricity supplier.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 29 July the Government set out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and confirmed that further funding would be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the small percentage of domestic energy consumers not reached by EBSS. This will include those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier.

This support will be provided alongside the 'Energy Price Guarantee' which will mean a typical UK household will pay no more than £2,500 a year on its energy bill for the next two years.

**Drew Hendry:**

[49186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has had discussions with Ofgem on ensuring that energy suppliers do not inappropriately raise customers Direct Debit amounts when customers are regularly in credit.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ministers and officials regularly meet with Ofgem to discuss a range of issues relating to the energy market.

Ofgem has taken robust action requiring suppliers with moderate or severe weaknesses to review their direct debit arrangements, submit an action plan and make repayments if needed ( <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/press-release-ofgem-requires-improvements-energy-suppliers-customer-direct-debits> ).

Following consultation, direct debit rules for suppliers have been strengthened ( <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/decision-statutory-consultation-strengthening-fixed-direct-debit-rules> ).

■ **Energy: Meters**

**Sarah Olney:**

[49229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Ofgem on energy companies' policies on responding to issues with customers' smart meters such as inaccurate or failed readings.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy works closely with Ofgem and industry to monitor and support a positive consumer experience of smart meters.

Energy suppliers are required by licence conditions to take all reasonable steps to ensure their customers' smart meters are fully functional and are obligated to provide customers with complete and accurate information. Ofgem is responsible for regulating energy suppliers against their licence obligations.

## ■ Energy: Standing Charges

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[48502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) potential impact of the standing charges on consumers and (b) the adequacy of efforts by energy companies to ensure standing charges are kept to a minimum cost.

**Graham Stuart:**

Standing charges are capped under the price cap and ensure millions of households pay a fair price for their energy.

The standing charge is a fixed charge that suppliers pass on to their customers to cover the cost of providing a live supply. If the standing charge was removed, these costs would be added to the unit price of energy. Otherwise, suppliers would not be able to recover the legitimate costs of serving customers. The setting of the standing charge is a commercial matter for individual suppliers.

## ■ Foreign Investment in UK

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[49132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made on levels of business investment in the UK compared to that in other countries.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The Office for National Statistics has calculated that the UK's business investment was £207bn in 2021. This amounted to 14.3% of GDP, the lowest of all nations in the G7 by this measure.

The Government is committed to boosting business led growth and investment across all parts of the UK.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made on securing business investment in the UK.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

Earlier this year, the Government secured £28.5 billion from Australian Investors for clean energy, technology and infrastructure. In addition, the Government has provided support to attract significant investment in manufacturing including Airbus' August announcement of a £100m investment in Broughton to increase their wing production capacity. In the Life Sciences sector, the Government has worked to secure over £80 million R&D investment by Smith and Nephew into their manufacturing facility in Melton near Hull.

## ■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is still his Department's policy to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

**Graham Stuart:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood will lead a rapid review of the Government's approach to net zero, so that it delivers its target in a way that is pro-business and pro-growth.

## ■ Heat Pumps

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[49296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to (a) support a globally competitive heat pump manufacturing sector in the UK and (b) help ensure that the industry is supported in the upskilling and recruitment of engineers to install and maintain heat pumps.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the British Energy Security Strategy, the Government announced a Heat Pump Investment Accelerator Competition worth up to £30 million. This aims to secure private investment to boost the competitive manufacturing of heat pumps and components in the UK, build supply chain resilience and support jobs in the green economy.

Training is available for existing heating engineers to install heat pumps, and can be completed in one week.

## ■ Heating: Fuel Oil

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[49277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of homes in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland that rely primarily on heating oil as a heating energy source.

**Graham Stuart:**

There are circa 1.7m UK households that rely on heating oil (5% of UK households). Recent figures on the proportion of households with oil primary heating systems show that this is 3.2% in England, 5% in Scotland, 10% in Wales and 68% in Northern Ireland.

## ■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: Energy

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to provide support to the (a) hospitality and (b) tourism sectors to help improve the energy efficiency of (i) heritage and (ii) other buildings.

**Graham Stuart:**

A Government review of the practical planning barriers when installing energy efficiency measures in heritage buildings will be completed by the end of 2022.

The Government is bringing forward an exemption on business rates for green technology, and providing tax discounts through the Climate Change Agreements scheme in return for businesses meeting energy reduction targets. Small businesses are eligible for grants under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, and can search for other local grant and advice schemes on gov.uk.

**Hospitality Industry: Gratuities****Angela Rayner:**[\[48358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an estimate of the total value of deductions in tips from front of house staff by their employers across the hospitality sector in 2021.

**Dean Russell:**

The Government published an impact assessment on requiring employers to pass on tips to workers in full. The analysis within the impact assessment showed that workers in restaurants, bars and pubs will benefit by c.£200m a year by retaining otherwise deducted tips that customers intended for them.

The Government is maintaining its support for a Private Members' Bill currently in Parliament on tipping. The Bill will bring into force new rules to protect millions of workers. It will create a legal obligation on employers to pass on tips to workers in full, in a fair and transparent manner, with no deductions other than those required or permitted by existing legislation, such as under tax law.

**Housing: Energy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what fiscal steps he plans to take to bring the UK housing stock up to a minimum of the energy standard C.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government's Net Zero Strategy committed to consulting on phasing in higher minimum performance standards to ensure all homes meet EPC Band C by 2035, where cost-effective, practical and affordable.

The Government is investing over £6.6 billion over this parliament to improve energy efficiency and decarbonise heating. The Government will deliver upgrades to over half a million homes in the coming years through our Social Housing Decarbonisation, Home Upgrade Grant Schemes and Energy Company Obligation Scheme, delivering average bill savings of £500, based on recent price cap estimates.



## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Bill Esterson:** [49638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what percentage of households with cavity walls did not have those walls insulated as of 31 December 2021.

**Bill Esterson:** [49639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of homes with a loft did not have that loft insulated as of December 31 2021.

**Bill Esterson:** [49640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of homes with solid walls had no solid wall insulation as of 31 December 2021.

**Bill Esterson:** [49641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of trends in the levels of (a) loft, (b) cavity wall and (c) solid wall insulations carried out from 2013.

**Graham Stuart:**

Information regarding cavity wall, solid wall and loft insulation levels from 2013 to 2021 can be found in the latest Household Energy Efficiency Statistics, detailed report 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/household-energy-efficiency-statistics-detailed-report-2021>. Tables 8.1 to 8.7 give estimates by insulation type, quarter, GB nation and an estimate of remaining potential.

## ■ New Businesses and Research

**Rachael Maskell:** [49197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to grow the industry cluster approach to business growth, research and development.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

The UK has an exciting mix of high-potential R&D clusters across the country, and across a wide range of sectoral and technological strengths.

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will support growth and R&D hotspots across the UK by increasing domestic public R&D investment outside the Greater South East by at least 40 percent by 2030.

We are also investing £100m to pilot Innovation Accelerators, supporting three UK city regions to become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation.



## ■ Nuclear Power

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to deliver new and advanced nuclear power in the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government intends to take one project to Final Investment Decision (FID) this Parliament and two projects in the next Parliament, subject to necessary approvals.

The Government will set up a new flagship body - 'Great British Nuclear' - to develop a resilient pipeline of projects. The Government appointed Simon Bowen to lead and help develop government proposals for this body.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2022, the Government launched the bid window for the £120 million Future Nuclear Enabling Fund. This fund will provide targeted support to potential new and advanced nuclear projects seeking to enter the UK nuclear market.

This is additional to £210m for Rolls-Royce SMR which will be matched by industry.

## ■ Paternity Leave

**Gareth Davies:**

[\[45560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of reforming the provision of statutory paternity leave.

**Dean Russell:**

Our Paternity Leave entitlement enables eligible employed fathers to take two weeks of paid leave within the first eight weeks following the birth or adoption placement. Eligible employed fathers also have other entitlements to balance work with childcare, including paid annual leave, unpaid parental leave and the right to request flexible working.

Shared Parental Leave allows eligible parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year.

As set out in our Manifesto, we are committed to making it easier for fathers to take Paternity Leave. In 2019 the Government consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay. We are currently considering responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

## ■ Public Holidays

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[45402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the Government decided not to have a bank holiday in the event that the England Women's National Football Team won the 2022 UEFA Women's Euro Championship.

**Dean Russell:**

The Government is extremely proud of the England Women's National Football Team and their success in winning the 2022 UEFA Women's Euro Championship.

The current pattern of public and bank holidays is well established, and while an additional bank holiday may benefit some communities and sectors, the overall cost to the economy is considerable. The latest analysis estimates the cost to the UK economy for a one-off bank holiday to be around £2bn.

**Research: Finance****Chi Onwurah:**[\[48330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an estimate of the impact of increasing energy prices on (a) private and (b) public research and development spending.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department recognises that increasing energy prices have the potential to impact public and private research and development (R&D) spending, both directly and indirectly.

The Department is examining these issues, including working with our Partner Organisations and key R&D-intensive sectors to understand the challenges they face and explore ways to protect them.

The Government has raised public R&D spending to its highest ever level, reflecting that innovation is vital to future economic growth and has announced a plan to deal with the increase in energy costs for charities, businesses and public sector organisations.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[49616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase research and development spending.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

At the Spending Review 2021 (SR21), the Government committed to its largest ever sustained uplift in research and development (R&D) funding, including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) largest ever R&D budget.

BEIS, in recent months, has published how our R&D settlement at SR21 will be allocated over the next three years.

Alongside this, increasing private R&D investment will be critical to reaching economy-wide R&D investment of 2.4% of GDP by 2027. In July 2021, we published the Innovation Strategy, which aims to boost private sector R&D investment across the whole of the UK by creating the conditions for all businesses to innovate and giving them the confidence to do so.

## ■ Trade: Certification

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[44984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons the transition to separate UK safety certification for tradable goods following the UK's departure from the EU will not take place until 2027; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of that timetable on (a) UK certification bodies and (b) businesses that have already sought UK certification.

**Dean Russell:**

The Government has announced a series of measures for many product areas to make the transition to UKCA requirements much simpler, less burdensome, and less costly for businesses over the coming years. This includes enabling conformity assessment undertaken to CE requirements before the end of this year to be used as the basis for UKCA marking for up to 5 years.

We are committed to supporting businesses, protecting consumers and building a sustainable domestic conformity assessment market. We appreciate the efforts already taken by businesses and UK Approved Bodies to get ready for the UKCA regime as this will ensure the transition is a success.

Most new products covered by UKCA requirements that are placed on the market after 31 December 2022 will still need to undergo UKCA conformity assessment by a UK Approved Body.

## ■ Unpaid Work

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[\[49181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning unpaid work trials at the outset of employment.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

Existing legislation already bans unpaid work trials that are not part of a legitimate recruitment process. They are not permitted if they are simply for the financial benefit of the employer or excessive in length. An unpaid trial lasting more than one day is highly likely to be illegal in all but very exceptional circumstances.

It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure they are paying their staff correctly and we will continue to take robust enforcement action against employers who fail to pay the minimum wage. Since 2015 we have ordered employers to repay £100 million of unpaid wages to 1 million workers.

**CABINET OFFICE**■ **Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Crime**

**Rachael Maskell:** [49716]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of violent crime in the last year was linked to (a) drug and (b) alcohol use.

**Edward Argar:**

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

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 8th September is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA letter response to 49716 [[UKSA Response to 49716 \(1\) \(1\).pdf](#)]

■ **Cabinet Office Procurement Processes Review**

**Angela Rayner:** [49167]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which recommendations of the Boardman Review are yet to be implemented.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the Written Ministerial Statement [Government Transparency and Accountability](#), put before the House by the Minister for the Cabinet Office on 15 July. The statement sets out action already taken in relation to reports by Nigel Boardman and the Committee on Standards in Public Life and that further work continues.

■ **Cabinet Office: Staff**

**Angela Rayner:** [49171]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) Government officials and (b) officials in his Department are employed to oversee the storage of personal protective equipment overseas.

**Edward Argar:**

The Cabinet Office Commercial Function do not oversee the storage of personal protective equipment overseas. This responsibility falls primarily to the Department of Health and Social Care.

■ **Committee on Standards in Public Life**

**Florence Eshalomi:** [49302]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recommendations of the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life entitled Upholding Standards in Public Life, published on 1 November 2021.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the Written Ministerial Statement Government Transparency and Accountability, put before the House by the former Minister for the Cabinet Office on 15 July 2022. The statement sets out action already taken in relation to reports by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and Nigel Boardman and that further work continues.

**■ Government Departments: Procurement****Angela Rayner:**[\[49168\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many emergency procurement rules introduced in March 2020 are in place as of 7 September 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

Existing procurement rules, which pre-date COVID-19, rightly allow the Government to procure at speed in times of emergency. These rules are not new and it is for contracting authorities to make their own determinations on when to use them.

**■ Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests: Public Appointments****Angela Rayner:**[\[49172\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Prime Minister will appoint a new Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Honourable Member to comments made by the Prime Minister's Official Spokesman on 7 September.

The Prime Minister wishes to consider the best way to achieve the functions of that role and to ensure the Government is held to the highest standards as the public expect.

**Florence Eshalomi:**[\[49301\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to appoint a new Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests.

**Edward Argar:**

I refer the Honourable Member to comments made by the Prime Minister's Official Spokesman on 7 September.

The Prime Minister wishes to consider the best way to achieve the functions of that role and to ensure the Government is held to the highest standards as the public expect.

**■ Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests: Resignations****Angela Rayner:**[\[49175\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Urgent Question on 16 June 2022 on Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests Resignation, Official Report, column

429, whether allegations of Islamophobia experienced by the hon. Member for Wealden are being investigated.

**Edward Argar:**

The investigation had not been completed under the previous Administration. Decisions on concluding this matter will be taken in due course.

#### ■ **Ministers: Codes of Practice**

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[49173\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister will make it her policy to update the Ministerial Code.

**Edward Argar:**

It is customary for every new Prime Minister to reissue the Ministerial Code. This will happen in due course, in the usual way.

#### ■ **Ministers: Redundancy Pay**

**Florence Eshalomi:**

[\[49300\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total cost was to the public purse of severance payments to Ministers who left the Government between 5 and 7 September 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

The provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation. Ministers who qualify will be entitled to a severance payment three weeks after they leave office, provided they are not re-appointed to government during that period.

The cost of severance payments to Ministers will be published in each department's annual report and accounts in due course.

## DEFENCE

#### ■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

**John Healey:**

[\[49057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications are awaiting an initial decision by his Department as of 7 September 2022.

**James Heappey:**

As of 8 August 2022, there are 71,300 ARAP applicants awaiting a decision on their application. This figure varies from those previously issued because previous figures referred to applications not yet subject to any internal decision-making, rather than to applicants that had not yet received a decision. We estimate there to be approximately 6,000 ARAP eligible individuals (comprising around 1,350 principals plus their family members) still to be relocated to the UK. We are focussing our efforts on identifying those eligible individuals who are still awaiting a decision and relocating

all those eligible to the UK. We estimate the vast majority of the outstanding 71,300 applicants to be ineligible.

**John Healey:**

[\[49058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel have been assigned to work on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme in each month since June 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The data requested can be found in the below table.

MONTH	ARAP PERSONNEL
June 2022	91
July 2022	84
August 2022	96
September 2022	100

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

**John Healey:**

[\[49059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to identify duplicate applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme in a timely manner.

**James Heappey:**

We are investing considerable effort and resources into delivering the ARAP scheme. Our new case working system, which went live in May, enables the identification of duplicate or repeat applications from one individual and links these together. Almost all existing applications have now been through a matching process and all new applications are automatically checked upon receipt.

**John Healey:**

[\[49060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications have not received an initial response within three months since September 2021.

**James Heappey:**

All applicants receive a confirmation of receipt automatically on making their applications.

Thereafter caseworkers are focussed on matching employment records to applicants to prioritise applicants with a higher chance of approval. As I have said in the House on a number of occasions, my priority is identifying those who worked with the UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan as quickly as possible.

**John Healey:**

[\[49061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many legal challenges relating to applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme his Department has received in each month since April 2021.

**James Heappey:**

As of 9 September 2022, the MOD is a defendant in approximately 112 legal challenges. The first legal challenge on ARAP was received in September 2021.

September 2021	5
October 2021	21
November 2021	20
December 2021	18
January 2022	4
February 2022	1
March 2022	6
April 2022	5
May 2022	2
June 2022	8
July 2022	13
August 2022	9

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[49150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister of State on 18 July 2022, Official Report, column 690 on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, how the list of 2000 eligible Afghans was determined; which personnel are listed; what steps his Department has taken to extract those people; and where those eligible people are as of 7 September 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The MOD is using Government employment records, and records held by groups representing eligible Afghans, with whom we are working closely, to quickly identify and process applications from those who meet the criteria of the ARAP scheme. Those criteria encompass a range of personnel, focussing on those who worked directly for or alongside UK Armed Forces.

We estimate that there are approximately 6,000 eligible individuals (including family members) still to relocate to the UK. This includes those under-going UK visa processing in third countries.



Supporting the movement of eligible ARAP persons out of Afghanistan is complex given the volatile political situation and the heightened risk to life, but despite this we are successfully moving individuals to safety. Our work with third country partners is critical and we are very grateful for their support.

■ **Antiship Missiles: Procurement**

**John Healey:**

[\[49563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Sea Venom programme (a) on time and (b) to budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The infrastructure Projects Authority conducted a Gateway review of the Sea Venom programme in July 2022 and returned a Delivery Confidence Assessment of Amber: Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues exist requiring attention. These appear resolvable and, if addressed promptly, should not present cost/schedule overrun.

**John Healey:**

[\[49576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for Sea Venom.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Sea Venom was assessed at £945.3 million and remains within the programme risk tolerance levels.

■ **Armed Forces: Asbestos**

**John Healey:**

[\[49071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the report entitled Investigation into the alleged exposure of UK Defence Personnel to asbestos during overseas exercises and training since 2018, published on 18 August 2022, how many armed forces personnel have been exposed to asbestos during overseas exercises in each year since 2018.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Ministry of Defence is considering what data sources may be relevant to answer this question. Therefore, I will write to the Rt Hon. Member with a substantive answer, and I will place a copy of my letter in the library of the House.

■ **Armed Forces: Boarding Schools**

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[\[49183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding was allocated to Continuity of Education Allowance for boarding schools in the UK in 2021-22.

**James Heappey:**

Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) is provided by the Ministry of Defence to eligible Service Personnel (SP) to assist them funding a place in a boarding school to achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the maintained day school sector if their children accompanied them on frequent and consecutive assignments. CEA is available to all SP irrespective of rank, subject to them satisfying the eligibility criteria.

The total spend on CEA in Financial Year 2021-22 was £83,460,088. SP are required to make a personal contribution of 8% for the state sector, or 10% for the independent sector. CEA is subject to a termly cap and SP are required to pay any fees in excess of this.

■ **Armed Forces: Buildings****John Healey:**[\[49569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the FDIS programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Initial Gate Business Case dated 1 March 2018 estimated that the core contracts would cost £3.056 billion over seven years. The current cost expectation for the FDIS contracts is £2.902 billion over seven years.

■ **Armed Forces: Private Education****Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**[\[49182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse was of Continuity of Education allowances for placements at (a) Eton College, (b) Winchester College, (c) Westminster School and (d) Millfield School in the last five years.

**James Heappey:**

The table below details the cost to the public purse of Continuity of Education allowances for placements at Eton College, Winchester College and Millfield School in the last five years.

No Continuation of Education Allowance values were recorded for Westminster School.

TAX YEAR	ETON COLLEGE- WINDSOR	MILLFIELD SCHOOL- STREET	WINCHESTER COLLEGE- WINCHESTER	GRAND TOTAL
2017-18	£230,294.70	£607,592.36	£95,605.83	£933,492.89
2018-19	£184,591.80	£570,142.51	£60,924.60	£815,658.91
2019-20	£115,259.00	£617,390.25	£84,904.40	£817,553.65

TAX YEAR	ETON COLLEGE- WINDSOR	MILLFIELD SCHOOL- STREET	WINCHESTER COLLEGE- WINCHESTER	GRAND TOTAL
2020-21	£182,416.42	£656,840.03	£101,204.60	£940,461.05
2021-22	£172,603.50	£665,306.84	£94,164.00	£932,074.34
Grand Total	£885,165.42	£3,117,271.99	£436,803.43	£4,439,240.84

Actual costed value between 01 April and 31 March each year. Adjusted for Retrospective Payments and Collection of Overpayments.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[\[49184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of fraud relating to the Continuity of Education Allowance have been recorded since 2012.

**James Heappey:**

The number of cases of fraud relating to the Continuity of Education Allowance recorded since 2012 is 12.

Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) assists Service personnel to achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the state-maintained day school sector due to the mobility of their family. CEA is available to all Service personnel, irrespective of rank, subject to them satisfying the qualifying criteria. Service personnel may select from a wide variety of schools across the UK from within the independent and state-maintained sectors that meet set criteria.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[\[49185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the Armed Forces claimed Continuity of Education Allowance in 2021-22 for UK-based private school fees; and how many claimants there were at each NATO rank.

**James Heappey:**

The below table details the number of Service Personnel that have received Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) for UK-based Private School fees in 2021-22 broken down by NATO Rank.

NATO RANK	DISTINCT COUNT OF EMPLOYEES
OF1	~
OF2	260
OF3	340
OF4	470
OF5	240

NATO RANK	DISTINCT COUNT OF EMPLOYEES
OF6	70
OF7	20
OF8	10
OF9	~
OR2	30
OR3	50
OR4	260
OR6	350
OR7	320
OR8	190
OR9	90
Grand Total	2,720

Rounded figures are to the nearest five, with numbers below five replaced by the tilde symbol ('~'). All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to avoid systematic bias. Totals have been rounded separately and therefore may not equal the sum of their rounded parts.

Due to the possibility of rank changes in year between CEA claims, only the most senior rank for each individual has been retained in order to avoid counting the same individual twice.

## ■ Defence: Costs

**John Healey:**

[\[49564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the AURORA programme.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Project AURORA, the replacement plutonium manufacturing capability at the Atomic Weapons Establishment is beginning its Initial Assessment phase. An Accounting Officer Assessment is currently being conducted by the Ministry of Defence in support of this, and the cost estimates for this phase of the project will be published once this assessment has been completed.

**John Healey:**

[\[49575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for Project Bramley.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I am withholding this information on the grounds of National Security as its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

■ **Defence: ICT**

**John Healey:**

[\[49562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the New Style of Info Base programme (a) on time and (b) to budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The New Style of IT Base programme provides the essential ICT infrastructure used by the Ministry of Defence at OFFICIAL and SECRET. The capability delivered by the programme is now in-service.

The current authorised programme spend since inception in 2015, and to March 2025, is £2.4 billion. The programme is on track to deliver its remaining deliverables at a forecast cost of £2.2 billion.

The Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) assessed the Programme in April 2021 as Red. In response, changes in the delivery team, leadership and technical capability, including with our supplier partner were made, and subsequently the IPA Review Team gave the programme an Amber rating in May 2022, on route to planned delivery of a Green status. The New Style of IT Base (B) programme is now scheduled to formally close by the end of financial year 2022-23. I assess this date to be realistic.

**John Healey:**

[\[49573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the New Style of Info Tech Base programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The New Style of IT Base programme provides the essential ICT infrastructure used by the Ministry of Defence at OFFICIAL and SECRET. The capability delivered by the programme is now in-service. The original authorisation, to design, build and transition to the new services by 2018, was £1.2 billion. Since then, the programme scope has been increased in terms of both time and capability.

The programme is now approved to maintain the current live services until follow-on services takeover incrementally until 31 March 2025 when the contract will end. Capability scope changes include an upgrade to the operating system, security

enhancements and deployment of 180,000 laptops to enable working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The programme is currently forecasting, including the original and increased scope and all in-service costs to 31 March 2025, at £2.2 billion against an approval limit of £2.4 billion. Despite the threefold increase in time, efficiencies and contractual price protection have resulted in a forecast cost that is less than double the original cost expectation.

**John Healey:**

[\[49574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the New Style of Info Tech Deployed programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The original costs of the New Style of IT (Deployed) programme from the first approval in November 2016 to the end of the second approval period in March 2024 were £722 million. Costs over the same period are currently forecast at £788 million, an increase of 9%, which reflects the need to meet operational requirements and deliver technology that keeps pace with coalition partners and evolving threats.

#### ■ F-35 Aircraft: Procurement

**John Healey:**

[\[49073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Lightning programme (a) on time and (b) budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The last Independent Projects Authority's review of the Lightning Programme occurred on 6 May 2022. The Review Team considered there to be sufficient evidence to support the Programme in proceeding to the next phase and awarded an Amber Delivery Confidence Assessment rating.

#### ■ Guided Weapons: Procurement

**John Healey:**

[\[49568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the FCASW programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Future Cruise Anti-Ship Weapon (FCASW) programme has been running under a joint UK-France Concept Phase and Assessment Phase since 2017. FCASW budget was approved at £409 million for the Concept Phase and Assessment Phase in 2021. Future cost expectations are dependent upon the choices to be made at the Full Business Case decision point and have not been finalised. The Assessment Phase is on track and progressing within its approved budget.

**John Healey:**

[\[49571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Marlett programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Martlett was assessed at £1.135 billion and remains within the bounds of the original estimation.

■ **India: Foreign Trade**

**John Healey:**

[\[49067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he last held discussions with his Indian counterpart on facilitating (a) re-export or (b) transshipment of controlled goods that may end up in Russian weaponry.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I have not held discussions with India in relation to either facilitating re-export, or transshipment, of controlled goods that may end up in Russian service. The Government continues to review all licence applications for the export of UK-manufactured military and dual-use equipment against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including an assessment of risk that the items will be diverted to an undesirable end-user or for an undesirable end-use. Restrictions on the export of military and dual use goods will also make it more difficult for Russia to access controlled goods.

■ **Meteor Missiles: Procurement**

**John Healey:**

[\[49572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Meteor programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Meteor was approved at £1190.790 million and remains within the bounds of the original estimation.

■ **Military Aid: Weather**

**John Healey:**

[\[49063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2022 to Question 38505 on Military Aid: Weather, how many MACA requests his Department has received in response to extreme heat in each year since 2000; and of those how many his Department has accepted.

**James Heappey:**

Since 2016, the Ministry of Defence has received the following Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) requests relating to hot weather:

- In June/July 2018, three MACA requests were made to support Greater Manchester Fire Rescue Service in tackling wild / moorland fires. All three requests were accepted.
- In August 2018, one MACA request was made for Defence Estate support to the Staffordshire Fire Rescue Service to support their tackling of a wildfire in the local area. This request was accepted.
- In May/June 2020, two MACA requests were made for Defence support to fight wildfires in Wareham Forest and Hatfield Moor respectively. Both MACA requests were accepted but were subsequently cancelled by the requesting Department before they were activated.

With regard to the data requested for the period 2000 to 2015, the information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Contracts

**John Healey:**

[\[49074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the MODnet Evolve programme (a) on time and (b) budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The MODNet Evolve Programme provides key capabilities for MOD's future core Information and Communications Technology (ICT) capability and contains six sub-projects at different points in the delivery cycle (two of which have successfully delivered). Assessment is that delivery of the outstanding projects within the programme approval is feasible.

The programme is currently forecasting a £320 million spend against an aggregated approval limit of £383 million. Work is ongoing to develop the scope and plans for the future elements of the Evolve Programme. In response to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) review, several recommendations, including the recruitment and appointment of a new full-time SRO, have been actioned to improve future project rigour, discipline, and delivery.

## ■ National Security: Cybersecurity

**John Healey:**

[\[49570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Joint Crypt Key Programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Joint Crypt Key Programme (JCKP) is a critical programme to Defence that protects our people, platforms, networks and information by providing high grade cryptography to a range of mission-critical services.



JCKP was established in 2016 with an original budget of £2.075 billion over 11 years (FY2016-17 to FY 2027-28). Following a Concept Phase, the budget profile has been extended to reflect a Full Operating Capability of 2035.

The projected whole life cost of JCKP is now £2.6 billion over 19 years (FY206/17 to FY 2035/36). This increase in cost has been driven by the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) proactive response to the dynamic and continually-evolving threat profile. It represents value for money, and is subject to MOD approvals processes.

## ■ **Satellite Communications: Procurement**

**John Healey:**

[\[49567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Future Beyond Line of Sight programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The current programme delivering Future Beyond Line of Sight capability is the SKYNET 6 Programme, which began in 2016. Future Beyond Light of Sight (FBLOS), is a name used centrally for a collection of projects, of which the only current major programme is Skynet 6, the latest phase in the Skynet programme.

The original authorisations for all the elements of the Skynet 6 programme total £7.1 billion over the 26-year programme life-cycle.

Since 2016, significant changes in technology and functionality have been built in to the programme to maintain an effective strategic satellite communications capability out to 2042 in support of front-line military capability. This has included addressing emerging risks, increases in Space sector prices and higher than expected obsolescence in equipment inherited from Industry, along with the additional management costs that these changes generate.

As a result, Skynet 6's costs have increased over the last six years to circa £8.35 billion, with the same end date. The programme is now in a stable delivery phase and operating within strict parameters of respective approved business cases.

## ■ **Trident**

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[49273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made on projected costs of the Trident nuclear programme per year, from 2021-22 to 2029-30.

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[49274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the Ministry of Defence has spent on the Trident nuclear programme each year from 2010-11 to 2021-22.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Ministry of Defence co-ordinates a range of interdependent programmes to support, maintain and renew the United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent.

Due to this complexity of the Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE), and organisational changes which have taken place over the past ten years, financial information is not available in the format requested. However, the National Audit Office estimated in 2018 that £50.9 billion would be spent on DNE equipment and support programmes during the period 2018-2028.

#### ■ Trident Submarines: Procurement

**John Healey:** [\[49566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) original and (b) current cost expectations for the Dreadnought programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review estimated that the Dreadnought programme is likely to cost a total of £31 billion (including inflation, over the lifetime of the programme) and set a contingency of £10 billion. The programme remains within its overall budget and on track for first of Class, HMS Dreadnought to enter service in the early 2030s.

#### ■ Weapons: Contracts

**Dave Doogan:** [\[49272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the BAE Systems' Mk 45 127mm gun scheduled to equip the UK's Type 26 Frigates, what (a) the total value of this contract is and (b) the value of the UK content of this contract will be.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

In July 2016, the Ministry of Defence signed a £183 million contract for the Maritime Indirect Fire System, which will be integrated onto the Type 26 Frigates. The contract covered the design and manufacture of the first three guns as well as a training system and ammunition, sustaining 43 skilled jobs in the UK, with work undertaken at BAE Systems' sites in Frimley, Broad Oak, Glascoed and Barrow-in-Furness. The UK content of the contract is in excess of £45 million.

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Charities: Energy

**Kim Leadbeater:** [\[49814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of rising energy costs on charities; and if will she take steps to generate additional funding for them through charity lottery reform.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As households and communities face rising energy prices, charities are seeing increased demand for their services while contending with the same price increases themselves.

With government support, charities have shown significant resilience over the past two years, and will again be crucial in supporting communities and households over the winter.

That is why the government will support all charities, public sector organisations and businesses with their energy costs this winter, offering an energy price guarantee for six months, equivalent to the protection offered to British households. Further details will be announced in due course.

Following the increases in July 2020 and the review of their impact published in March 2022, there are no plans to make further policy changes to society lottery sales and prize limits. Funding raised by the large society lottery sector is continuing to grow, as data published by the Gambling Commission since the review shows.

My department will keep engaging constructively with their counterparts across the sector and government to continuously monitor the impact of rising energy costs on the charity and broader civil society sector.

#### ■ **Collegiate Charitable Foundation**

**Catherine West:**

[\[49228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she expects the inquiry into the Collegiate Charitable Foundation to be concluded.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Charity Commission opened a statutory inquiry into The Collegiate Charitable Trust in 2018. It is considering regulatory issues relating to the administration of the charity by the trustees.

Due to the nature of the concerns, interim managers were appointed to manage the charity. The timeframe of the inquiry depends on the interim manager's findings and any other regulatory action which may be required. Neither the government nor the Charity Commission is able to provide further information on the inquiry until it has concluded.

While DCMS is the Charity Commission's sponsor department, the Commission is an independent regulator and not subject to ministerial direction or control. As with other regulatory inquiries, once it is complete the Charity Commission will publish a report on its website in line with its processes.

#### ■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: East of England**

**Peter Aldous:**

[\[49123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effect on her policies of trends in the level of population growth in the East of England; and if she will make a statement.

**Julia Lopez:**

DCMS has not made an assessment of the effect on policies of trends in the level of population growth in the East of England.

## ■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many payments were fraudulently charged to her Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Julia Lopez:**

In the financial year 2019-20, four payments were fraudulently charged to the Department using electronic purchasing cards totalling £4000.

The Department obtained refunds from the bank and recovered all four fraudulent payments in the same financial year totalling £4000.

The Department had no fraudulent payments charged to the Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

## ■ Festivals and Special Occasions: South Asia

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[48201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much financial support the Government has provided to support South Asia Heritage Month in each of the last five years; what proportion of that funding came from (a) his and (b) other Government departments; and if he will make a statement.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Arm's Length Body, Arts Council England (ACE), via its National Lottery Project Grants funding has supported a wide range of organisations and events focused on engaging with and celebrating South Asian Heritage, including supporting the South Asian Heritage Trust, which delivers their annual South Asian Heritage Month observance.

South Asian Heritage Month was established in 2020. Since then, ACE awarded a £20,175 National Lottery Project Grant to the South Asian Heritage Trust for their South Asian Heritage Month Online Programme in May 2022. Additionally, ACE awarded £41,700 to 'Tribe Arts' in July 2022 as part of a project to establish partnerships with South Asian Heritage Month.

Significant projects have also been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund between 2003- 2021, in the London Borough of Harrow, with a total investment of £178,732 which explored and celebrated the South Asian community.

Current projects supported by Historic England are celebrating South Asian Places of Worship through thematic listing and research, and two projects have been awarded through their Everyday Heritage programme to the Bengali Photography Archive and the Sikh Development Academy.

## ■ **Holiday Accommodation: Crime**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many cases of (a) criminal gangs, (b) drug dealing, (c) modern slavery or (d) sexual exploitation operating in short term holiday lets were recorded in England in the last 12 months.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the potential use of short term holiday lets for illegal activities, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of licencing short term holiday lets.

**Julia Lopez:**

The sharing economy has brought many benefits to the tourism sector and wider economy, as well as creating an additional income stream for homeowners. However, we recognise that the increase in short-term letting has also prompted some concerns. These include the impact on the housing market and local communities, and a sense that new entrants in the market are not being held to the same health and safety standards as, for example, hotels and B&Bs.

The Government committed in the Tourism Recovery Plan published in June last year to consider a possible Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme in England. As a first step in this process, a Call for Evidence was published on 29 June and runs until 21 September.

We want to hear from a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, in order to build a much-needed evidence base on these issues and enable us to develop proportionate policy responses for a future consultation. We ideally want to strike a balance between the benefits of the sharing economy and addressing the concerns of the impact on some communities, alongside ensuring consistency in quality among the range of different tourism accommodation providers.

The Home Office does not collect data specifically in relation to short term holiday lets for the offences listed.

## ■ **Sports: Autism**

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[49252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of provisions for autistic children to attend (a) major sporting events and (b) Premier league football games.

**Stuart Andrew:**

As set out in the National Autism Strategy published in 2021, the government aims to encourage businesses and organisations across the country to take steps to become more autism friendly to help tackle exclusion, loneliness and social isolation. As part of this, we expect sports organisations and major sporting events to do all they can to ensure autistic spectators have the best possible experience.

In 2016, the Premier League, alongside The Shippey Campaign and The Lord's Taverners, launched a programme to fund sensory rooms in 20 top-flight clubs. These provide a more comfortable and appropriate environment for autistic children to watch football matches. They are in use at several Premier League clubs including Chelsea FC, Manchester City FC and Arsenal FC.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Agriculture: Further Education and Skilled Workers

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[45803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to promote (a) further education courses and (b) skilled jobs in agriculture; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on ensuring that this activity meets the skilled labour needs of the agricultural sector.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

In the 2021 Spending Review, the government set out its plan to invest £3.8 billion more in skills over the Parliament as a whole, ensuring people can access high-quality training and education that addresses skills gaps and boosts productivity. This investment is underpinned by our Skills for Jobs reform programme, which will put employers at the heart of the system by aligning most technical courses with employer-led standards by 2030.

These reforms will empower employers to shape publicly funded training offers to meet their needs and create more routes into skilled employment in sectors critical to UK economy, including the agriculture sector. Apprenticeships are in the vanguard of this change. There are 41 high quality apprenticeship standards in the agriculture, environmental and animal care occupational route, each of which have been developed by employer trailblazer groups. In addition the first T Levels in Agriculture Land Management and Production and Animal Care and Management will follow suit from September 2023. We are also bringing in changes to ensure everyone has access to education and training that will help them to get a great job. This includes Free Courses for Jobs, enabling learners without a level 3 qualification (or learners with any qualification level but earning below the National Living Wage) to gain a qualification for free. 18 qualifications in agriculture are currently on offer under this scheme, which can be explored here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-a-free-level-3-qualification/list-of-free-level-3-qualifications-available-to-eligible-adults#agriculture>.

We are promoting and increasing awareness of our skills provision to learners and employers through the Skills for Life campaign, which targets employers, young people, and adults. Our campaign toolkits provide more information and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/skills-campaign-toolkits>.

The department regularly engages in cross-government forums to assess and address labour market challenges across the economy including with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs on skills needs for the food manufacturing and agricultural sectors.

■ **Children: Day Care**

**Helen Hayes:**

**[49209]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he (a) has had and (b) plans to have with the (i) Chancellor of the Exchequer and (ii) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential impact of rising energy bills on (A) nurseries and (B) other childcare providers.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[49210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of rising energy bills for childcare providers on the cost of childcare in the next two years.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The government recognises and continues to assess the impact rising energy prices and inflation are having on nurseries, childminders and other childcare providers. Rising global prices of energy are likely to mean rising energy bills for childcare providers over the next two years, and that is why the government is taking action to support businesses, including those in the early years and childcare sector.

The Secretary of State meets regularly, and will continue to work closely with, his cabinet colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy and HM Treasury to monitor the impacts on the early years and childcare sector.

On Thursday 8 September, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced measures to tackle current issues in the UK energy market, including the introduction of an Energy Price Guarantee to limit the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity.

Typical UK households will pay no more than £2,500 a year on their gas and electricity bill for the next two years from Saturday 1 October. This will save the average household £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October. This will be in addition to the announced £400 energy bills discount for all households and together they will bring costs close to where the energy price cap stands today. This will support childminders operating from their own home who are on domestic energy tariffs.

There will be a new six-month scheme for businesses and all non-domestic energy users, including charities and public sector organisations. Providers in all educational sectors will therefore be eligible, including providers of childcare on non-domestic premises like nurseries.

After this initial six-month scheme for non-domestic customers, the government will provide ongoing, focused support for vulnerable sectors. There will be a review in



three months' time to consider where this should be targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

### ■ Children: Food

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[49212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that children living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals have access to healthy meals.

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[49213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of increases in the cost of living on the number of children who will be both living in poverty and ineligible for free school meals in the next three years.

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[49214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will undertake a review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals before the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Through the provision of free school means (FSM), together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, the greatest ever proportion of school children, 37.5%, are now provided with a free meal at lunchtime, at a cost of over £1 billion a year.

The department continues to monitor the situation surrounding the rising cost of living whilst working with other government departments on support surrounding this issue. We do not have any plans to extend universal provision, but we will continue to review free school meal eligibility, to ensure that these meals are supporting the most disadvantaged, those out of work or on the lowest incomes. In setting a threshold, the department believes that the current level, which enables children to benefit, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one. Extending FSM eligibility to all pupils would carry a significant financial cost.

The department is also providing over £200 million per year for the next three years to provide healthy food in the holidays via our Holiday Activities and Food programme, providing breakfast clubs in thousands of schools, as well as delivering the School Fruit and Vegetable scheme and wider government schemes such as Healthy Start vouchers.

### ■ Countryside: Curriculum

**Ian Levy:** [\[46145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of including The Countryside Code in the National Curriculum.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department does not plan to make an assessment of including the Countryside Code in the national curriculum.



All state-funded schools have the flexibility within their school curriculum to teach about the Countryside Code, through for example:

- Citizenship, which teaches young people about their responsibilities as adults and includes opportunities for active citizenship, for example, forms of volunteering to support a cause or their local community.
- Science, where children are taught about the scientific concepts that relate to the environment.
- Geography, as part of fieldwork and the teaching of key aspects of physical geography such as land use.

#### ■ Department for Education: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

[47428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Jonathan Gullis:**

The department incurred no financial losses as a consequence of fraudulent usage of electronic payment cards during financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 or 2021/22.

#### ■ Education: Finance

**Munira Wilson:**

[46160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a list of all discretionary funding streams administered by his Department that local authorities in England are able to bid or apply for that relate to (a) education and (b) support for children and families.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department publishes detailed information on its grants including, but not limited to, funding that local authorities in England are able to bid or apply for. This information is held on the Government Grants Information System (GGIS) and published in the resultant government grants register. The information can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-grants-data-and-statistics>.

The government grants register is released annually in March.

#### ■ Free School Meals

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[49075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to analysis from the Child Poverty Action Group published on 9 June 2022, what he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of that organisations finding that 800,000 children living in poverty are not eligible for free school meals.

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[49076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to guarantee access to healthy meals for children living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals.

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[49077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of increases in the cost of living on the number of children who will be both living in poverty and ineligible for free school meals in the next three years.

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[49078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will undertake a review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals before the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Through the provision of free school means (FSM), together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, the greatest ever proportion of school children, 37.5%, are now provided with a free meal at lunchtime, at a cost of over £1 billion a year.

The department continues to monitor the situation surrounding the rising cost of living whilst working with other government departments on support surrounding this issue. We do not have any plans to extend universal provision, but we will continue to review free school meal eligibility, to ensure that these meals are supporting the most disadvantaged, those out of work or on the lowest incomes. In setting a threshold, the department believes that the current level – which enables children to benefit, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools – is the right one. Extending FSM eligibility to all pupils would carry a significant financial cost.

The department is also providing over £200 million per year for the next three years to provide healthy food in the holidays via our Holiday Activities and Food programme, providing breakfast clubs in thousands of schools, as well as delivering the School Fruit and Vegetable scheme and wider government schemes such as Healthy Start vouchers.

## ■ Languages: Education

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[48198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department spent on teaching (a) Punjabi, (b) Bengali, (c) Hindi, (d) Gujarati, (e) Urdu, (f) Sinhalese, (g) Tamil, (h) Pashto and (i) Dari in schools in England in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[48199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which exam bodies are contracted to examine students in (a) GCSEs, (b) A Levels and (c) other exams in (i) Punjabi, (ii) Bengali, (iii) Hindi, (iv) Gujarati, (v) Urdu, (vi) Sinhalese, (vii) Tamil, (viii) Pashto and (ix) Dari in England; how long these contracts are; and if he will make a statement.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Awarding organisations offering GCSEs and A levels are independent, not-for-profit organisations. They are not contracted to provide assessments for pupils in particular subjects. AQA offer a GCSE and A level qualification in Punjabi and Bengali, as well as a GCSE in Urdu. Pearson Edexcel offer a GCSE and A level qualification in Gujarati and Urdu and International GCSEs (IGCSEs) in Bengali, Hindi, Sinhalese, and Tamil. Cambridge International offer an A level in Hindi, Urdu, and Tamil. There are no qualifications available in Pashto or Dari. Awarding organisations are free to introduce qualifications in any GCSE or A level subject where they consider there to be a case to do so.

It is up to schools to decide which languages are taught as part of their curriculum, both at primary and secondary school, and the government does not specify which languages should be taught or how to teach them.

There has been no funding provided directly for the teaching of Punjabi, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Sinhalese, Tamil, Pashto and Dari within the previous five years. However, the department has committed to establishing a network of language hubs, as per the Schools White Paper, and are considering ways in which we can support home, heritage and community languages as part of this.

**■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection****Peter Dowd:**[\[45042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to evaluate the impact of the free period products scheme in schools and colleges on the availability of those products in those settings.

**Cat Smith:**[\[45281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to evaluate the impact of the free period products scheme in schools and colleges on the availability of those products in those settings.

**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[45296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to evaluate the impact of the free period products scheme in schools and colleges on the availability of those products in those settings.

**Ruth Jones:**[\[45360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to evaluate the impact of the free period products scheme in schools and colleges on the availability of those products in those settings.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The period products scheme launched in January 2020 and has most recently been extended until July 2024. Take up of the scheme is monitored regularly by the department and our supplier, phs. Within the first two years of the scheme, 94% of secondary schools and 90% of post-16 organisations had ordered at least once.

These organisations have older students and therefore are more likely to have a higher proportion of students in scope, compared to primary schools.

The department is considering opportunities to publish further management information in the future, as well as the need for further research into the scheme to evaluate its impact.

## ■ Schools: Air Conditioning

**Daisy Cooper:**

[47671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the letter from Education Unions dated 21 July 2022, how many schools were provided with HEPA air filtration devices during the 2022 summer holidays in preparation for the Autumn term.

**Jonathan Gullis:**

Over the last year, backed by £25 million in Government funding, the Department has provided 386,699 CO2 monitors to state-funded education settings including early years, schools and further education providers. CO2 monitors can support schools to identify poor areas of ventilation which will provide further reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, especially over the winter months. As well as helping to identify areas that are poorly ventilated, CO2 monitors can be useful to help settings balance good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm.

Where an area of poor ventilation has been identified that cannot be resolved through simple measures such as opening doors and windows. Where it is not possible to maintain adequate ventilation, it may be appropriate for settings to consider the use of an air cleaning unit while the underlying ventilation issue is addressed. In January, the Government committed to fulfil all eligible applications for air cleaning units to state-funded education settings for poorly ventilated teaching spaces where quick fixes to improve ventilation were not possible. All eligible applications received have been fulfilled, with 8,026 air cleaning units distributed by 24 June 2022. All units delivered use High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA).

A marketplace remains open for all state-funded education settings as a route to purchasing air cleaning units directly from suppliers at a suitable specification and competitive price. All units available on the marketplace use HEPA filtration. It can be accessed on GOV.UK at the following link: [Air cleaning units for education and childcare settings - Find a DfE approved framework for your school - GOV.UK \(find-dfe-approved-framework.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-cleaning-units-for-education-and-childcare-settings).

## ■ Shipping: Qualifications

**Damien Moore:**

[49762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the uptake in maritime qualifications in schools and colleges.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

Provision is already available for both those under 16 in a school setting seeking to understand more about the industry, and for post-16 students studying at level 2 and

3, who may be seeking to undertake a qualification to progress into an apprenticeship or into employment and wish to take a qualification which will involve a work-based setting.

There are around 40 qualifications focusing on aspects of maritime studies approved for funding for young people and adults, some of which are available only to adults. Others are available to those of school age or in further education. There are 12 apprenticeship standards in this sector approved for delivery, including Maritime Mechanical and Electrical Mechanic, Marine Surveyor, and Seafarer.

The Careers & Enterprise Company is supporting schools and colleges to embed best practice in the delivery of careers information, advice, and guidance, so young people are aware of the full range of training and careers available to them and have access to a broad range of employers and workplaces, including those in the maritime sector. This will be delivered through the national roll-out of Career Hubs, Careers Leaders training, and the Enterprise Adviser Network.

The department has established the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST). This group is made up of representatives from across industry, trade unions, and training providers. It will look to address skills barriers in the sector by utilising and catalysing existing skills provisions. As part of this, existing provision will be reviewed to see how it can best meet the present skills demand and future needs. UKSST's work will be driven by the needs of stakeholders from across the sector.

## ■ Sign Language: GCSE

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[45588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to launch a consultation on the British Sign Language GCSE.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[46150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons his Department will not introduce a GCSE in British Sign Language until September 2025.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department is committed to developing the new British Sign Language (BSL) GCSE as quickly as we can, while also ensuring it can be completed to the highest standard. We are working closely with subject experts, stakeholders and Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator, to develop the draft subject content for the BSL GCSE. The department plans to consult publicly on this draft content later this year. We will then make any necessary amendments in light of the consultation responses and finalise the high-level subject content next Spring.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, work to support the management of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including to ensure pupils could access the qualifications they needed to progress, was prioritised. This meant that the development of this GCSE was delayed. However, once the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic eased, we resumed work to develop the new BSL GCSE.

The development and introduction of a new GCSE is a complex process. It typically takes over two years from the publication of the department's high level subject content to the first teaching of a new qualification.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[46000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support the education of students with special educational needs.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department has increased high needs funding by £1.65 billion over two years, bringing total high needs funding to over £9.7 billion by the 2023/24 financial year. We are providing additional support to local authorities through our Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) programmes. These programmes will help local authorities provide effective and sustainable services that will support children and young people with SEND to achieve better outcomes.

Alongside this, the department is investing up to £18 million in supported internships over the next three years, aiming to double the number of supported internships by 2025. This will help more young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans have the skills they need to secure and sustain paid employment.

Later this year, the department will publish a National Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) improvement plan, setting out our response to the SEND and AP Green Paper consultation and the next steps for implementation of system reform.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Greater London

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[45461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of (a) teachers and (b) therapists employed in special educational needs schools in London; and what steps he is taking to help increase the number of (a) teachers and (b) therapists employed in those schools.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

In November 2021, there were 3,423 full-time equivalent teachers in state-funded special schools in London, which is 1,057, or 45% higher than in 2010.

The department's priority is to ensure that we continue to attract, retain, and develop the highly skilled teachers that we need, as set out in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, published in 2019.

Children and young people may access therapists through a number of different routes, one of which may be directly through their school. In November 2021, there were 169 staff contracts in state-funded special schools based in London, with the

main role reported as therapist. These figures will not include therapists working in schools on contracts that last for fewer than 28 days.

The further increases in school funding next year mean that high needs funding for children with more complex needs in England, including those in London special schools, is increasing by £1.65 billion over two years, between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This is an increase of 21% and will bring total high needs funding to over £9.7 billion by 2023/24.

Decisions about how funding is used locally, including for the employment of specialist teachers and other specialist services, are made by local authorities and schools.

## ■ **Students: Cost of Living**

**Conor McGinn:**

**[49180]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on alleviating the rising cost of living pressures facing higher education students.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and impacted students. Many higher education providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance.

The Energy Price Guarantee announced on 8 September 2022 will save the average household at least £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October, in addition to the £400 energy bills discount for all households. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount.

We have provided guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) regarding funding for the 2022/23 financial year to support disadvantaged students and those who need additional help. Universities will continue to be able to support students through their own hardship funds and the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for academic year 2022/23.

The department has also worked closely with the OfS to clarify that English providers can draw upon this funding now, to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Maximum grants and loans for living costs have also been increased by 2.3% this academic year, 2022/23. Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the tax year 2022-23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

In addition, maximum tuition fees, and the subsidised loans available from the department to pay for them, remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year for standard full-time courses. We are also freezing maximum tuition fees for the



2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. As well as reducing debt levels for students, the continued fee freeze will help to ensure that the higher education system remains sustainable while also promoting greater efficiency at providers.

As part of a package of support for rising energy bills, the government is giving a council tax rebate payment of £150 to households that were living in a property in council tax bands A to D as their main home on 1 April 2022. This includes full-time students that do not live in student halls or in property that is not considered a house in multiple occupation for council tax purposes.

### ■ Students: Loans

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[45755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps are being taken to support those repaying (a) student loans and (b) student loans plus post-graduate loans in the context of the rising cost of living.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The student loan repayment system incorporates a number of protections for those making loan repayments. Repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold (currently £27,295 for a post 2012 undergraduate plan and £21,000 for a post graduate loan) and do not change as a result of the interest rate charged or the amount borrowed. If a borrower's income drops, so does the amount they repay. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, then they do not have to make repayments at all. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower.

The Energy Price Guarantee announced on 8 September will save the average household at least £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October and this is in addition to the £400 energy bills discount for all households.

As part of the package of support for rising energy bills, the government is also giving a council tax rebate payment of £150 to households that were living in a property in council tax bands A to D as their main home on 1 April 2022.

### ■ Universities: Freedom of Expression

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to protect freedom of speech in universities.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Hendon, to the answer I gave on 20 July 2022, to Question [26904](#).



## ■ Vocational Education: Qualifications

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the quality of technical qualifications.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

The department is reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high quality technical options that support progression and meet employer needs. This includes the introduction of T Levels, new technical qualifications designed with employers, reviewing the technical qualifications we continue to fund at level 3 and below, and introducing new Higher Technical qualifications.

We are putting employers at the heart of the skills system and boosting the quality of qualifications on offer by basing them on employer-led occupational standards so that all students leave education with the skills most needed by industry.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Air Pollution

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[45102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions and engagement his Department has had with the UK's highest polluters to encourage them to reduce their emissions.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Under the Environmental Permitting Regulations, a wide range of industrial installations require an environmental permit to operate. Permits set conditions of operation, including limits on emissions of pollutants. Permits for large and more polluting industries are issued and enforced by the Environment Agency. Smaller premises are regulated by local authorities.

Permits require use of best available techniques (BAT) to prevent and reduce emissions to air, water and land. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have published the government response to the joint consultation on the 'Best Available Techniques': a future regime within the UK - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).

### ■ Allotments: Greater London

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[45565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to incentivise the establishment of allotments in London.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the importance of access to local green spaces including allotments in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles within our

communities. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that local planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space and opportunities for new provision, which can include allotments, and their plans should then seek to accommodate this. The National Model Design Code highlights that design considerations vary with the type of space and that open space design needs to consider factors such as: access, maintenance, ecology and also allotments and community growing for food production, learning and community engagement.

Natural England is also promoting the use of allotments and gardening projects in London through its work with Thriving Communities & The National Academy for Social Prescribing.

### ■ Arable Farming: Land

**Damien Moore:**

[\[49766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Department is taking to ensure sufficient arable land is available for the domestic farming industry.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the importance of food security, which is why we published the Food Strategy earlier this year. The Food Strategy puts food security at the heart of the Government's vision for the food sector. It aims to broadly maintain the current level of food that we produce domestically and boost production in sectors where there are the biggest opportunities.

We announced in the Food Strategy that we will publish a Land Use Framework for England in 2023, which will set out land-use change principles to ensure food security is balanced alongside climate and environment outcomes. These principles will guide local authorities, land managers, and others across England to move towards a more strategic use of land. We are seeking to deliver as much as we can on our limited supply of land, to meet the full range of Government commitments through multifunctional landscapes.

### ■ Bomb Disposal: Seas and Oceans

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[47630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that underwater munitions clearance contractors who claim to have environmentally friendly methods of clearance, such as low order deflagration, do have the capability as claimed on their application for a licence.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Defra recognises the impact underwater noise from ordnance clearance can have on the marine environment and we have made clear in a [joint position statement](#), published in November 2021, that quieter alternatives to loud detonations should be prioritised. The relevant regulator rigorously assesses each license application to

clear unexploded ordnance from the seabed. All regulators require applicants to provide data to demonstrate the technology's effectiveness at reducing environmental impacts, submit a detailed impact assessment, associated mitigation requirements and a robust monitoring plan, including noise monitoring, which is used to verify the technology's effectiveness. The Government is also testing a range of alternative clearance technologies.

## ■ Cats and Dogs: Imports

**Derek Thomas:** [\[45243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the special measures introduced for trade in animals from Belarus, Poland, Romania and Ukraine on 8 July 2022, if he will take steps to ensure those measures are not further extended without advance notice.

**Mick Whitley:** [\[49784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with rescue and rehoming organisations on the potential impact on their operations of the extension of the ban on the importation of dogs and cats from Romania, Poland, and Belarus until 29 October 2022.

**Mick Whitley:** [\[49785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2022 to Question 38558 on Cats and Dogs: Imports, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of rescue and rehoming organisations on the mitigation of biosecurity risks relating to the importation of dogs and cats from Romania, Belarus, and Poland.

**Mick Whitley:** [\[49786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to announce whether the temporary ban on the importation of dogs and cats from Romania, Belarus, and Poland will continue beyond October 29th 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK Government has made the difficult decision to extend the temporary suspension of commercial cats, dogs, and ferrets (including rescue animals) dispatched or originating from Ukraine, Belarus, Romania, and Poland for a further eight weeks to the 29 October 2022.

We continue to engage with competent authorities in impacted countries, the European Commission, and external partners (including rescue and rehoming charities) to gather data and information to enable us to keep the biosecurity risks to Great Britain under review. The measure is under constant review based on the evidence provided to ensure it is proportionate to the risks posed.

The Government appreciates the work of rescue and rehoming organisations who work to ensure that unwanted and abandoned animals are given the opportunity to find a forever home whilst complying with our animal health and welfare legislation.

Given this is a fluid situation it may not always be possible to give advance notice of any extension to the measure. We continue to engage with external partners including rescue and rehoming organisations based here and abroad, veterinary experts and carriers on the impact and future of the measure.

That is why this is only a temporary measure, to ensure that we protect our biosecurity at this challenging time. Given the consequences of getting this wrong, I hope you will understand why we are being cautious.

## ■ Construction: Noise

**Justin Madders:**

[\[45879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department last made an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) noise and (b) vibration limits for pile driving.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that noise is managed effectively in order to promote good health and quality of life. We do not consider, however, that a single objective noise-based measure is appropriate to all situations, as effect levels are likely to be different for different noise sources, different people and at different times.

The Government has worked with the British Standards Institution to publish BS5228, which sets standards for noise and vibration from construction work, including pile driving. Local authorities and magistrates' courts are required to take this standard into account when exercising their powers and functions under noise management legislation in relation to construction works. The most recent update to this standard was in 2015.

## ■ Environment Protection

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to consult with stakeholders on the 25 Year Environment Plan in advance of its publication in 2023.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Defra has run a number of public consultations in 2022, including those on long term targets and on nature recovery as well as on a range of individual policies. We do not plan to overlay these with a further public consultation. This was the approach taken for the original 25 Year Environment Plan.

The development of the content within the revised plan has been open and collaborative, drawing on expertise available across Government, its Arms Length Bodies, and external stakeholders. We will continue with this engagement over the coming months.

The revised plan will be subject to the relevant scrutiny and parliamentary laying procedures as set out in the Environment Act 2021.

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to section 8 of the Environment Act 2021, what steps his Department is taking to include measures to improve people's enjoyment of the natural environment in future environmental improvement plans.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Under the Environment Act, the Government must report annually on the implementation of its 25 Year Environment Plan and review it every five years through publishing a revised Environmental Improvement Plan. In January 2023 we will publish the first EIP that sets out, across 10 goal areas, our cross-government targets/commitments (including Environment Act interim and long-term targets) and the strategies/policies in train to deliver against them.

Defra is delivering programmes to improve people's enjoyment of the natural environment including: completing the England Coast Path; delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme; leading the cross-government green social prescribing programme and establishing the new Coast to Coast National Trail across the North of England. We are also working across Government and with environmental organisations, businesses and wider society to implement measures to improve people's enjoyment of nature. The publication of the upcoming Environmental Improvement Plan will summarise delivery of work to increase access to nature across Government to date, and our plans and ambitions for delivering more in this space over the next five years.

## ■ **Environment Protection: Standards**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the response to his Department's consultation on environmental targets.

**Trudy Harrison:**

We received over 180,000 responses to the environmental target consultation from a range of individuals and organisations. The Government expects to publish its response when it finalises its environmental targets. We continue to progress environmental targets, particularly our biodiversity apex target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, which is required by the Environment Act 2021.

## ■ **Flood Control: Solihull**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[44932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the flood risk to houses in Solihull constituency.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Solihull area has 8 live schemes with a total value of £2,400,000 in the current Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management six-year programme. These schemes are currently forecast to reduce flood risk for 227 properties in Solihull by 2027.

These are predominantly Property Flood Resilience schemes being led by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and supported by the Environment Agency (EA) as a response to flooding from surface water and Ordinary Watercourses - 89 of these properties already have their measures in place and the remaining 138 are on target for delivery by the end of the programme (March 2027).

The EA has two schemes at Initial Assessment stage investigating the wider River Cole Catchment area. These involve a Nature Based Solutions study on the River Cole headwaters, around Nethercote and Hollywood, investigating Natural Flood Management options possible for the area; and investigations into the causes of, and potential solutions to, flooding on the Hatchford and Westerley brooks (near Birmingham international Airport). Both of these studies are currently developing Hydraulic modelling to better inform the projects and are being run in partnership with Solihull MBC.

In addition, the EA aims to develop the hydraulic model update for the River Blythe as part of the future programme to better understand the flooding mechanisms on this watercourse. This work is forecast to commence in 2023-24.

## ■ Forests

**Ruth Jones:**

**[46070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an estimate of the size of the area of England that will be covered by trees and woodland in (a) 2022, (b) 2023 and (c) 2024.

**Trudy Harrison:**

We aim to plant 7,000 hectares per year in England by the end of this Parliament. This puts us on track to ensure at least 12% woodland cover in England by the middle of the century.

As of 31 March 2021, the area of woodland (greater than 0.5 ha in size) in England was reported as 1,323,000 hectares (provisional statistics) or 10.2% of land area.

This statistic is scheduled to be confirmed in Forestry Statistics 2022 (published by Forest Research). Tree canopy cover outside National Forest Inventory woodland (where woodland is over 0.5 hectares in extent and greater than 20 metres in width) amounted to 565,000 hectares in England as of January 2016, or 14.6% of land cover at that time.

In the recent public consultation on Environment Act targets, we proposed a target to increase tree and woodland canopy cover from the current level of 14.5% to 17.5% by 2050.

## ■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Sam Tarry:**

**[45057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the environmental impacts of the UK not meeting its commitment to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to set a legally binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050. To meet this target, the Government has set five-yearly carbon budgets which restrict the amount of greenhouse gas the UK can legally emit in a five year period. The UK met the first two carbon budgets and is on course to meet the third (2018 – 2022). The Net Zero Strategy sets out clear policies and proposals for keeping us on track for our coming carbon budgets (4/5/6), our ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and sets out our vision for a decarbonised economy in 2050.

The Government has a statutory obligation to assess the risks that climate change poses to the country and develop plans and policies to address those risks. The Climate Change Committee's Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk offers a detailed insight into the risks and opportunities the UK faces from climate change. These include risks of drought, flooding, extreme heat, average temperature increase and pests, diseases and invasive species to terrestrial and freshwater habitats, peat and soil health, natural carbon stores and sequestration, and agriculture. This evidence informed our [third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment \(CCRA3\)](#), which we laid in Parliament on 17 January 2022. The third National Adaptation Programme, responding to the risks in CCRA3, is due to be published next year.

## ■ Inland Waterways and Rivers: Leisure

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[45967]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase public access to (a) rivers and (b) waterways for (i) leisure and (ii) sport.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government recognises that taking to our inland waters can have a positive effect on people's physical and mental wellbeing. We are aware that there has been a considerable increase over the last few years in numbers of people taking up water-based activities such as canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding and open water or wild swimming. Access to regulated waterways can be granted through licenses from the appropriate navigation authority. Access to unregulated waterways can be arranged through voluntary access agreements. The Government encourages interested parties to work together to increase the access to unregulated rivers and waterways through encouraging and incentivising voluntary access agreements.

Sport and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and the Government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of



background, should have access to and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Government also welcomes applications for designated bathing waters for both coastal and inland waters such as rivers. Local authorities, groups, and individuals can apply, with Government encouraging applications by writing annually to the Chief Executive of every local authority in England and other stakeholders such as swimming associations.

## ■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[46144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent destructive fishing in Marine Protected Areas.

**Mark Spencer:**

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

We have built a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering 40% of English waters and are now focusing on making sure they are properly protected. Nearly 60% of our 178 English MPAs are already protected from damaging fishing activity, including byelaws this year in the first four offshore sites, which ban bottom towed gear over sensitive habitats. We are aiming to have all MPAs in English waters protected from damaging fishing activity by 2024. We recently consulted on a legally binding target under the Environment Act to improve the condition of the species and habitats protected in these sites. In July we launched a consultation on five candidate Highly Protected Marine Areas in English waters. With the highest level of protection in England's seas to enable the ecosystem to fully recover, many activities including commercial and recreational fishing would be prohibited. HPMAs would complement the existing MPA network. Any HPMAs Government decides to designate following the consultation would be designated by July 2023.

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[49295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ban bottom trawling fishing in offshore Marine Protected Areas.

**Mark Spencer:**

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

We have built a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and are focused on making sure they are properly protected. Now that we have left the European Union and the Common Fisheries Policy, we can use new powers in the Fisheries Act 2020 to manage damaging fishing activity in our 40 English offshore MPAs. It is only fishing activity that might damage the legally protected habitats and species in MPAs that requires management. We have already introduced byelaws in the first four English offshore sites which ban bottom towed gear over sensitive



habitats. We have also published a call for evidence relating to the next thirteen sites. We are aiming to have all MPAs in English offshore waters protected from damaging fishing activity by 2024.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Rosie Cooper:** [49102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 16 June 2022 from the hon. member for West Lancashire on gene editing, reference ZA59971.

**Trudy Harrison:**

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. A reply to the hon. Member is being prepared and will be issued very shortly.

**Rosie Cooper:** [49104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 11 July 2022 from the hon. member for West Lancashire on recycling logos on packaging, reference ZA60124.

**Trudy Harrison:**

I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. A reply to the hon. Member is being prepared and will be issued very shortly.

#### ■ **Office for Environmental Protection**

**Ruth Jones:** [46051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Office for Environmental Protection.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In line with Cabinet Office guidance regarding new arm's length bodies, Defra conducted a review of the Office for Environmental Protection between May and July 2022. The review focused on the efficacy, efficiency, governance and accountability of the new body. Twelve recommendations were identified to improve administration and governance processes. The initial review concluded that a full review was not required at this early stage of the OEP's operations. The full list of recommendations are published on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/office-for-environmental-protection-public-body-review-outcome/outcome-recommendations-from-the-oep-review-2022-to-2023>).

#### ■ **Peat Bogs: Controlled Burning**

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [45295]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent illegal peat burning.

**Trudy Harrison:**

No burning of peat is permitted.

The burning of vegetation for management purposes is a permissible management activity and is conducted for a variety of reasons. These can include reducing the risk of wildfire or for the conservation, enhancement or management of the natural environment. In these circumstances the vegetation above the soil layer is burned rather than the soil itself. The burning of any peat present is not permitted.

In respect of protected deep peat habitats, the Heather and Grass etc. Burning (England) Regulations 2021 and associated guidance sets out the very limited circumstances where burning of vegetation will be seen as a permissible activity, when conducted in the right place for the right reasons.

Any unlicensed burning of vegetation on sites to which the Heather and Grass etc Burning (England) 2021 applies, will be investigated.

## ■ **Pets: Imports**

**Ruth Jones:** **[46096]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to reduce the number of (a) dogs, (b) cats and (c) other animals brought illegally into the UK.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) works collaboratively with Border Force and other operational partners at ports, airports and inland, sharing intelligence to enforce the Pet Travel rules, disrupt illegal imports, safeguard the welfare of animals and seize non-compliant animals.

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was reintroduced to the House of Commons following the Queen's Speech in May 2022 and will progress to Report stage as soon as parliamentary time allows. The Bill allows us to further protect the welfare of pets by introducing restrictions to crack down on the low welfare movements of pets into Great Britain and includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation.

## ■ **Plastics: Inland Waterways and Rivers**

**Ruth Jones:** **[46049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate his Department has made of the level of plastic pollution in (a) waterways and (b) rivers in England in the latest period for which data is available.

**Trudy Harrison:**

There are no statutory requirements for the Environment Agency to undertake monitoring of plastic pollution in waterways and rivers in England. However, we are making great strides to tackle plastic pollution through the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan which sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. We've published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy, maximising resource efficiency and minimising waste. The plastic problem is one of management not eradication, to

reduce, reuse, and recycle the material we have and not let it escape into, and damage, our environment. We are also undertaking research to understand better the nature of pollution from microplastics.

We have made significant progress by introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products preventing billions of these tiny plastic beads from entering the ocean each year and brought in measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. The use of single-use carrier bags has been reduced in the main supermarkets by over 97% since introducing our a 5p and single-use carrier bag charge. In May 2021 we increased the charge to 10p and extended it to all retailers to build on its success to date and create a level playing field for all businesses.

We recently consulted on proposals to ban the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, balloon sticks, and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and drink containers. We are committed to going further and addressing other sources of plastic pollution, which is why we also ran a call for evidence to help us gather information on other problematic plastic items and help inform future policy making. We are particularly interested in wet wipes, tobacco filters, sachets, and other single-use cups. We are currently analysing responses and will provide a further update in due course.

## ■ River Lea: Swimming

**Bim Afolami:**

[45297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting bathing water designation to the River Lea in Harpenden and Wheathampstead.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Bathing waters are designated through an application process and Defra welcomes applications for designation for both coastal and inland waters such as rivers. Local authorities, groups and individuals can apply for sites to be designated. Defra encourages this by writing to the Chief Executive of every local authority in England and other key stakeholders such as swimming associations. It is these local authorities and stakeholders who will best know which popular bathing areas may be suitable for designation.

For further information, please visit our web page on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bathing-waters-apply-for-designation-or-de-designation>

## ■ Rivers

**Justin Madders:**

[45874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 June 2022 to Question 22447 on Rivers, when his Department plans to publish the report on the review of statutory powers, roles and responsibilities in relation to assets and watercourse maintenance, including riparian landowners.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government wants to ensure that responsibilities in relation to assets and watercourse management and maintenance are clear and that there are appropriate powers in place to enable suitable management and maintenance to be undertaken.

Our review of the statutory powers, roles, and responsibilities in relation to assets and watercourse maintenance began earlier this year and the full review will be completed in 2024 after which it will be published. During this time, we will be working with the reviewer and stakeholders to identify the relevant issues and take any immediate action that is necessary.

**Rivers: Hitchin and Harpenden****Bim Afolami:**[\[45464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help enhance chalk streams located in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency, including in the river (a) Hiz, (b) Oughton, (c) Purwell, (d) Mimram, (e) Lea and (f) Ver.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government and the Environment Agency (EA) is implementing actions identified in the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Chalk Streams Restoration Strategy, including improving its assessment of the flow pressure in chalk streams and working with partners to identify actions to improve flows.

Within the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency, the EA is working with the Catchment Partnership to develop river restoration projects on chalk streams near Whitwell. Further downstream on the River Mimram, it is engaging with landowners and working with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust on sites at Digswell and Panshanger Park to narrow over wide and straightened channels.

On the River Lea, the EA is working with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to improve sites at Batford Springs Nature Reserve and at the Meads in Wheathampstead, stabilising banks and improving in channel and bankside vegetation.

On the River Ver, the EA is working with St Albans District Council to revitalise the water environment in Verulamium Park, restoring the River Ver to a more natural chalk stream, more resilient to climate change, and better able to support iconic chalk stream biodiversity. It has also been engaging with the Gorhambury estate to develop restoration projects.

The EA is currently in discussions with Affinity Water concerning an environmental improvement project for the River Hiz and securing funds through Ofwat's Price Review process. In addition, since 1996, an augmentation scheme has been operational for the Rivers Hiz and Oughton to supplement flows from groundwater in times of dry weather to mitigate against the impact of abstraction.

The Government and the EA will continue to work with Water Resources East and Water Resources South East to define the long term environmental ambition for the area, including that for chalk streams.

### ■ **Sewage: Waste Disposal**

**Tim Farron:** [\[45758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the Storm Overflow Discharge Reduction Plan.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan was published on 26 August 2022.

### ■ **Tree Planting**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[46173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of trees.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Trees are at the forefront of the Government's plans to achieve net zero by 2050, whilst also helping achieve many other environmental and economic outcomes.

Our England Trees Action Plan (ETAP), published in May 2021, sets out the long-term, generational vision for trees and forestry to 2050. The Plan details how we will treble tree planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament, contributing to 30,000 hectares of new trees per year across the UK by 2025. The Plan is supported by the £675 million Nature for Climate Fund. We have already:

- Launched the England Woodland Creation Offer, a major new grant scheme supporting tree planting and woodland creation, with over £15 million available this year alone.
- Established three new Community Forests with over 1,000 hectares of new woodland being planted across the total 13 Community Forests since 2020.
- Significantly invested to build and enhance our nursery capacity to ensure we have sufficient high quality, bio-secure tree stocks that can help us meet our ambitions.

### ■ **Tree Planting: Hitchin and Harpenden**

**Bim Afolami:** [\[45492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of trees planted in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency since 2010.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Forestry Commission publishes statistics on new planting of woodland, and trees outside woodland, in England. For most Government supported new planting of woodland there are accompanying related geospatial data on its location. From these

datasets our best estimate is that there were at least 400,000 newly planted trees with government support in woodland in the 12 years 3 months, from 1 April 2010 to 30 June 2022, in the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

### ■ Walley's Quarry Landfill: Pollution Control

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to help tackle pollution at Walley's Quarry; and if he will make a statement.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Environment Agency (EA) has been closely regulating Walleys Quarry Ltd in respect of hydrogen sulphide emissions from the company's site, which have had an unacceptable impact on the local community. The EA is committed to delivering a long-term solution and has been working to achieve this since early 2021. Over that period, it has made 143 visits, issued 178 compliance assessment reports (CAR forms) and served 2 Enforcement Notices. This significantly exceeds the level of regulatory attention a well-performing landfill operation would normally receive. Sustained resolution of the issues at the site requires complex engineering solutions, which have taken time to implement.

The actions the EA has required the company to take are under constant review. They are underpinned by the following key objectives to manage landfill gas and hydrogen sulphide emissions from the site: 'Contain, Capture and Destroy'.

- To contain emissions - over the course of the last year almost half the surface area of the site has been capped to reduce dispersion of landfill gas. Walleys Quarry Ltd has also revised its capping and phasing plans so that future tipping areas will be smaller, with more frequent capping.
- To capture emissions - new gas extraction infrastructure has been installed including extraction wells and gas transfer equipment. Walleys Quarry Ltd has revised its Landfill Gas Management Plan. Since the beginning of May 2022 approximately 3000m<sup>3</sup> per hour of landfill gas is being collected and treated. This is almost double of what was captured at the end of 2020.
- To destroy emissions - improvements have been made to the gas flare capacity and infrastructure on the gas engines.

In July 2022, the monthly average concentrations of hydrogen sulphide detected by the monitoring units were below the long-term (lifetime) health-based guidance value for exposure. Odour complaints are also much reduced.

The EA continues to work with local authorities and other responsible bodies to ensure emissions of hydrogen sulphide remain under control.

## ■ Water Supply: Solihull

**Julian Knight:**

**[45860]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect water supplies in Solihull constituency.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government and the Environment Agency (EA) work with stakeholders, water companies and other abstractors to monitor and manage water resources in England. Water companies are responsible for ensuring a secure water supply for their customers. The Solihull area lies in Severn Trent Water's Strategic Grid Water Resource Zone. That zone is supplied from boreholes, rivers, and reservoirs.

The EA has weekly meetings with Severn Trent Water to discuss the management of the drought, including making sure it is following its drought plan. Severn Trent Water has been encouraging customers to reduce water consumption, by promoting water saving messages, and increasing its leakage detection and repair rates. Severn Trent Water's pre-agreed statutory drought plan, which sets out its operational response, is published on its [website](#). Requests for specific details about the Solihull constituency's water supply should be addressed to Severn Trent Water.

## ■ Water Supply: Standards

**James Wild:**

**[49794]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to implement Recommendation 1 of Ofwat's 2018 Call for evidence consultation – Guaranteed Standards Scheme.

**James Wild:**

**[49795]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the current minimum guaranteed standards scheme payment amounts for water supply interruptions.

**Trudy Harrison:**

14 of the 17 water companies operating in England and Wales have fully implemented Ofwat's recommendation to increase compensation payments for supply interruptions. One further company has partially implemented the recommendation.

Ofwat's Guaranteed Standards Scheme: Recommended changes to the UK Government report, 2018, is the latest assessment of compensation levels. It is the first assessment since 2001.

## ■ Whisky: Scotland

**David Linden:**

**[49239]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of rising energy costs on the Scotch whisky industry.



**Mark Spencer:**

Whilst no specific assessment has been made on the impact of rising energy costs on the Scotch Whisky industry, the UK Government is in regular dialogue with the industry, and aims to provide the framework for a forward-thinking, competitive alcoholic drinks sector which can grow, export and innovate in line with Government ambitions.

The Government is excited to see the investment in green energy sources being made in some distilleries and looks forward to seeing many further such schemes in the coming years as we continue the drive to greater efficiency.

The Government plans to announce a new six-month scheme - the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses - to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn with further details on the practicalities to be announced soon. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Afghanistan: Minority Groups****Afzal Khan:**[\[45122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help protect (a) the Hazara community and (b) other minorities in Afghanistan.

**Leo Docherty:**

We regularly press the Taliban to respect the human rights of all Afghans and to protect minority groups, including Hazaras, from terrorist attacks. We are working closely with international partners to ensure credible monitoring and accountability mechanisms are in place. In March 2022, we worked through the UN Security Council to strengthen human rights monitoring, including of risks to Hazara and other minorities, in the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan mandate. We also supported a UN Human Rights Council resolution that led to the appointment of Richard Bennett as Special Rapporteur. His recent report to the Human Rights Council included an assessment of the situation for the Hazara and other minorities: we are working with the international community on how best to respond to his recommendations. We are also carefully reviewing the findings of the recent Hazara Inquiry report.

**■ Africa: Gynaecology****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[49110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to improve access to safe gynaecological care in Africa as part of his Department's Women and Girls Strategy.



**Vicky Ford:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is proud to defend and promote comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as outlined in the May 2022 International Development Strategy and in the upcoming 2022 Women and Girls Strategy. Supporting safe gynaecological care in Africa is a critical element of the UK's commitment to help end the preventable deaths of mothers and babies by 2030.

UK supports these efforts through diplomacy, technical and policy engagement, and through investments and partnerships. The Women's Integrated Sexual Health programme delivers voluntary family planning services and SRHR across 17 African countries. The UK also supports countries to strengthen their health systems to deliver life-saving maternal, reproductive and child health services including through the Global Financing Facility and Reproductive Health Supplies programmes, and global partnerships such as the family planning partnership - FP2030 and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

**■ Africa: Humanitarian Aid****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[49605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much humanitarian aid to (a) Somalia, (b) Kenya and (c) Ethiopia has been (i) identified as non-essential and (ii) suspended by his Department since 18 July 2022.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[49606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which humanitarian aid payments to countries in (a) sub-Saharan and (b) Sahelian Africa have been (i) identified as non-essential and (ii) suspended by his Department since 18 July 2022.

**Vicky Ford:**

The FCDO has prioritised spending that is vital to protect against immediate threat to life and wellbeing, will prevent people falling into humanitarian need, or will prevent delays to accessing healthcare, primary education, sanitation and clean water, in addition to considering the value for money of any decisions.

**■ Armenia: Azerbaijan****Stephen Doughty:**[\[49692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help preserve peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government continues to work with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to encourage them to engage with the OSCE Minsk Group and the EU-led negotiations process to secure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Against the background of renewed hostilities and loss of life, senior diplomats have stressed to the Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors to

London in recent weeks the importance of regional stability and negotiations without pre-conditions. I also reaffirmed these messages to the Armenian Foreign Minister and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister on 15 and 17 September respectively. Our Ambassadors in Yerevan and Baku have taken similar steps, in close coordination with partners.

## ■ Balkans: Russia

**Stephen Doughty:**

[\[49690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help mitigate Russian influence in the western Balkans.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to counter Russian influence in the Western Balkans. Through our programme funds we are helping strengthen the resilience of the region across areas such as cyber security, defence capacity building and countering disinformation, including through the recent deployment of a military counter-disinformation expert to support NATO HQ Sarajevo in countering false Russian narratives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## ■ China: Sub-Saharan Africa

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she is taking steps to help tackle China's growing influence in sub-Saharan Southern Africa.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK recognises that China is an important source of aid, trade and investment for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This poses risks in terms of economic and political influence. We are working with partners, including the G7, to ensure low and middle income countries have an alternative to strategic dependence on China or any other country. The UK offers wide-ranging partnerships to African countries that support a freer, safer, healthier, greener and more prosperous continent. Through British Investment Partnerships, we are providing honest, reliable investment that creates jobs, boosts economic growth and draws countries closer to major free-market democracies.

## ■ Commonwealth

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much her Department spent during the Prime Ministers' tenure as Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth between 2018 and 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

When Commonwealth leaders came together in London for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018, they agreed a range of ambitious

policy objectives to create a fairer, more sustainable, more prosperous, and more secure Commonwealth. To help realise that vision, the UK announced over half a billion pounds of programmes and projects across HMG, covering a range of important policy themes. Details of UK delivery against these commitments, overseen by the FCDO, are set out in our two comprehensive Commonwealth Chair-in-Office reports: 2018-2020

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/916018/UK-Commonwealth-Chair-in-Office-Report-2018-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916018/UK-Commonwealth-Chair-in-Office-Report-2018-2020.pdf)

and 2020-22,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-commonwealth-chair-in-office-report-addendum-2020-to-2022/uk-commonwealth-chair-in-office-report-addendum-2020-to-2022-continued-delivery-of-commonwealth-summit-commitments>

these have been laid in the libraries of both Houses.

## ■ **Darfur: Detainees**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[47487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of reports that 197 people have been detained by the Rapid Support Forces in West Darfur.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have raised our concerns with the Sudanese authorities, most recently during a visit to Khartoum by the Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan, as well as at the UN Security Council. We will continue to press the Sudanese authorities to deliver their obligation to protect civilians, and push for those responsible for abuses to be held to account. The UK supports the International Criminal Court Prosecutor in his important work to investigate human rights abuses in Darfur, and regularly raises human rights concerns in Sudan at international fora such as the UN Human Rights Council.

The UK has repeatedly called for the Sudanese authorities to accelerate implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement to help address violence and instability in Darfur and other historically marginalised areas in Sudan. The fragile security situation across the country has been exacerbated by the ongoing political crisis and underlines the urgent need for an agreement which re-establishes a civilian-led government.

## ■ **Developing Countries: LGBT+ People**

**Elliot Colburn:**

[\[48528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress her Department has made on supporting LGBT+ communities in (a) low- and (b) middle-income countries.

**Vicky Ford:**

As co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC), the UK and Argentina oversaw the adoption of the ERC's first strategy and five-year implementation plan in July 2021. Donor coordination is one the ERC's priorities and was discussed at the ERC Conference co-hosted by the UK in Buenos Aires on 8-9 September.

Plans for levels UK funding for the 2022-5 Spending Round are not yet confirmed, but we will continue to focus on low and middle income countries in the global south. In June 2022, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced £2.7 million of new UK funding to support LGBT+ grassroots human rights defenders, and advance equality and freedom across the Commonwealth.

**■ Development Aid****Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[44991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether all international climate finance commitments made by her Department in the 2021 spending review period, save the funding made by British International Investment, will be countable as Official Development Assistance.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is committed to doubling our International Climate Finance (ICF) to £11.6 billion between financial years 2021/22 and 2025/26. All UK ICF is countable as Official Development Assistance.

**Chris Law:** [\[45478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact that the suspension of non-essential aid spend until September has had on developing countries where the FCDO funds programmes.

**Vicky Ford:**

We are currently assessing impacts of these measures on our programmes and programme participants.

**■ Development Aid: Females****Sarah Champion:** [\[49157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the £745 million announced for Official Development Assistance to women and girls programming in the 2022-23 financial year, how much and what proportion of that funding will be spent on programmes for girls and young women.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is putting women and girls at the heart of its foreign and development policy. This financial year, the UK intends to restore bilateral ODA spending on women and girls to 20/21 levels. Initial allocations have been set internally to deliver the priorities set out in the International Development Strategy and the Integrated Review, based

on the FCDO's Spending Review 2021 settlement. Given the Government's response to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, wider ODA pressures including the ODA-eligible expenditure incurred through the Afghan resettlement programme and the UK's support to people fleeing Ukraine, the FCDO and other ODA spending departments will need to revisit those allocations to ensure all ODA eligible spending is managed within 0.5% of GNI this calendar year.

## ■ Development Aid: Food Poverty

**John McNally:**

[\[45306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the reduction of the foreign aid budget on levels of food poverty in affected countries.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK has been a leading donor in food and agriculture. Our agriculture portfolio pursues the dual objective set out in our Agriculture Development Policy of promoting food security while helping smallholders to benefit from increased incomes. The FCDO Food Security Action plan seeks to prevent famine and limit its impacts, focussing on countries most at risk with humanitarian assistance and resilience - building British Investment Partnerships. It also aims to ensure a coherent and effective international response to the food security crisis, including through a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. The International Development Strategy reiterates our commitment to develop lasting solutions to challenges in the food system. The FCDO is also developing a sustained crisis and policy response for this and coming years; and accelerating the long-term transition to a sustainable and resilient global food system.

Despite recent fiscal pressures caused by the pandemic, the UK Government remains a leading donor, spending more than £11 billion in aid in 2021. We are prioritising spending that protects against immediate threats to life and wellbeing and action that prevents people falling into humanitarian need. The UK will return to its 0.7 per cent Official Development Assistance commitment as soon as the situation allows.

## ■ Ethiopia: Armed Conflict

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[49106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the extent of the abuse of children through recruitment into armed conflict in the conflict in northern Ethiopia over the past year.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Joint Investigation by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Ethiopian Human Rights Commission found that abuses against children had taken place throughout the conflict in northern Ethiopia. This included reports of the use of child soldiers during the conflict.

The UK is firmly committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to protecting all children affected by armed conflict. The UK welcomes the inclusion of Ethiopia as a situation of concern in this year's UN Secretary General's Report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), published in July 2022. This will support greater scrutiny of violations against children in Ethiopia as a result of conflict, through additional monitoring and reporting and is essential to breaking the cycle of violence.

### ■ **Forced Marriage Unit**

**Alex Norris:**

**[45473]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason her Department's Forced Marriage Unit has changed its recording practices in preparing the 2021 statistics; what assessment she has made of the potential impact of those changes on the ability to directly compare those statistics to previous years'; and whether the Forced Marriage Unit is taking steps to produce statistics that can be used to monitor changes year on year.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) changed its recording practices in 2021 to better reflect the nature of incoming referrals. Full details are available in <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/forced-marriage-unit-statistics-2021>. FMU statistics are not an indication of the prevalence of forced marriage, but a reflection of the number and nature of referrals received by the FMU through its public helpline or mail enquiry service.

### ■ **Gaza: Armed Conflict**

**Beth Winter:**

**[45676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of whether British-made equipment was used in hostilities between Islamic Jihad in Gaza and Israel between 5 and 7 August 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria. We will not issue a licence if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression. The Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, and if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Criteria, those licences will be revoked.

### ■ **Gaza: Israel**

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[44948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in the context of the Israeli Military airstrikes on Gaza in May 2021, whether she has made representations to her Israeli counterpart on the impact of the damage to civilian

infrastructure of those bombings on equitable and timely access to healthcare for patients in Gaza; whether the Government is providing support to increase access to healthcare for patients in Gaza; and if she will make a statement.

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[45145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has held discussions with her Israeli counterpart on the impact of the shelling in May 2021 of the agricultural chemical warehouse belonging to the Khudair Group on the environmental determinants of health of Palestinians in surrounding areas; and if she will make a statement.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure, hospitals, and clinics following the escalation in violence in May 2021. The UK continues to urge Israel to ensure humanitarian access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services. The UK remains a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides core services, including health and education to Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare, including critical health services, with the Israeli authorities. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

## ■ Humanitarian Aid: Armed Conflict

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[49109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on prohibitions that exist in (a) international humanitarian law and (b) other international laws and conventions against deliberate restrictions on humanitarian access during civil conflict.

**Vicky Ford:**

International humanitarian law contains rules regarding the provision of humanitarian relief and assistance to civilians in situations of 'armed conflict'. For example, parts of the Geneva Convention requires relevant parties (subject to conditions) to allow and facilitate the delivery of medical and hospital supplies, as well as other supplies that are essential to the survival of civilians, such as food and clothing. Relief consignments should not be diverted nor delayed, except in some defined circumstances. Humanitarian relief personnel may, where necessary, accompany relief consignments, subject to the approval of the party in whose territory they will carry out their duties.

Intentionally directing attacks against personnel, installations, material, units or vehicles involved in a humanitarian assistance or peacekeeping mission, may, in certain circumstances, fall within the definition of a war crime under the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).



## ■ Iran: Capital Punishment

**Sarah Champion:** [\[49160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking diplomatic steps with (a) the Iranian Government and (b) the United Nations Human Rights Council to challenge the death sentences imposed on Zahra Seddiqi Hamedani and Elham Choubdar in Iran on 6 September 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The United Kingdom is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Iran. We have made clear to Iran, both in public and in private, our opposition to the use of the death penalty and will continue to do so. We have designated Iran as a Human Rights Priority Country and continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor human rights record, including through the Human Rights Council.

LGBT+ people have long faced discrimination and violence in Iran, and are unable to live openly. During the Interactive Dialogue on Iran, at the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council, the UK set out our serious concerns about Iran's continued human rights abuses, including against human rights defenders, activists and persons from marginalised minorities.

## ■ Israeli Settlements: International Law

**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[49176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on that country's E1 settlement plan and its compliance with international law.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK welcomes the decision to postpone the discussion to advance the E1 settlement plan. We will monitor developments closely. The UK continues to urge the Government of Israel to permanently end its settlement expansion and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and advancement of the E1 settlement plan. The UK continues to raise our opposition to settlement advancements at the UN Security Council.

## ■ Kosovo: Peace Keeping Operations

**Stephen Doughty:** [\[49693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support (a) peace, (b) stability and (c) security in Kosovo.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK remains committed to supporting a more secure, stable and prosperous Kosovo. We devote sustained political and diplomatic effort to securing progress in the EU-facilitated Dialogue aimed at normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo, including through active engagement by the PM's Special Envoy for the



Western Balkans, Sir Stuart Peach. Our programme of technical assistance is aimed at supporting Kosovo's efforts to deliver reforms that are crucial for its longer term resilience. The UK also contributes troops and continues to offer a Strategic Reserve Force to the NATO-led Force in Kosovo (KFOR) which is a battalion-sized high readiness Strategic Reserved Force based in the UK.

## ■ **Mali: Private Military and Security Companies**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[49108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of reports of a) sexual violence including rape, b) looting and c) arbitrary arrests by Russian Wagner Group mercenaries and others during a raid on the village of Nia-Ouro in Mopti region of Mali on 4 September 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The reports of human rights abuses, sexual violence, looting and arbitrary arrests by the Wagner Group are horrifying. The Wagner Group has a track record of exploiting natural resources, spreading disinformation, and abusing human rights. The UK is monitoring the situation in Mali closely, together with international partners. Minister Ford, my predecessor as Minister for Africa, condemned reports of civilian massacres and human rights abuses in August. She also called for transparent and impartial investigations including by the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) and reiterated the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law during counterterrorism operations. The UK is committed to supporting the people of Mali. We are supporting the delivery of humanitarian and protection assistance to those most in need, including healthcare and psychosocial care for women, girls, men and boys affected by violence. We also work with local organisations to support efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Ultimately, we know that long term stability in Mali will only come from addressing the root causes of conflict, including governance.

## ■ **Moldova: Russia**

**Stephen Doughty:**

[\[49691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Moldovan counterpart on countering Russian attempts to destabilise Moldova.

**Leo Docherty:**

The former Foreign Secretary spoke to Moldovan Foreign Minister Popescu on 13 and 20 May to discuss the situation in the breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria, the invasion of Ukraine and wider support to Moldova in the face of Russian aggression.

The UK strongly supports Moldovan sovereignty and territorial integrity. Alongside NATO allies, we helped to develop a tailored support package for Moldova to assist defence modernisation and reform, announced at the NATO summit in June 2022.

We are helping build a stronger, more resilient Moldova through work on anti-corruption. In April, Lord Ahmad announced £12 million of Good Governance Funding over the next 3 years to support Moldovan reforms.

## ■ **Mozambique: Internally Displaced People**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[49111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of internally displaced people at risk of death by starvation in Mozambique; and what steps he plans to take to help prevent deaths by starvation in that country.

**Gillian Keegan:**

In northern Mozambique, the UN estimates 946,000 people are displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. Below average harvests in June have also been reported, driven by drought, conflict, and the impact of Cyclone Gombe. The UK is delivering emergency assistance for those displaced, including nutrition interventions, and water and sanitation. During 2021/22, UK funding reached 118,000 children under five, along with 14,000 pregnant and lactating women with vital nutrition interventions. Our diplomatic support also aims to improve humanitarian access with our High Commissioner to Mozambique currently co-chair of the high-level emergency task force with the Mozambican Government focused on Cabo Delgado (and COVID-19).

## ■ **Nicaragua: Politics and Government**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[47368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of reports of (a) the detention of Matagalpa Bishop Rolando Álvarez and (b) the raid of his residence by Nicaraguan police in that country in August 2022.

**Jesse Norman:**

We have voiced the UK's deep concern about the ongoing deterioration of political and human rights in Nicaragua both with the Nicaraguan Government and in multilateral fora.

Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right, and must be protected. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief tweeted about the reports of harassment of members of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua on 10 August and is discussing it with members of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

Lord Ahmad highlighted our concern about the detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez during his visit to the Holy See on 26 August.

We will continue to raise our concerns about human rights in Nicaragua, including on the detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez, and urge the Nicaraguan Government to respect the human rights of all Nicaraguan people.

## ■ **Nicaragua: Religious Freedom**

**Cat Smith:** [\[48397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the state of the right to freedom of religion or belief in Nicaragua.

**Cat Smith:** [\[48398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Nicaraguan counterpart on human rights.

**Cat Smith:** [\[48399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the detention of (a) Father Óscar Benavides and Bishop Rolando Alvarez and (b) other Catholic lay leaders, seminarians and priests in Nicaragua.

**Jesse Norman:**

We have voiced the UK's deep concern about the ongoing deterioration of political and human rights in Nicaragua both with the Nicaraguan government and in multilateral fora. Reports of harassment of members of the Catholic church in Nicaragua are concerning. Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right, and must be protected. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief tweeted on the issue on 10 August and is discussing it with members of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. Our Permanent Observer at the Organisation of American States also referred to the issue in a statement at a special meeting on the situation in Nicaragua on 12 August. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon highlighted our concern about the detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez during his visit to the Holy See on 26 August and he is due to give a statement on behalf of the UK about the human rights situation in Nicaragua at the UN Human Rights Council's Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on 13 September. We will continue to raise our concerns about the situation in Nicaragua, including the detention of members of the Catholic church, and urge the Nicaraguan Government to respect the human rights of all Nicaraguan people.

## ■ **Pakistan: Disaster Relief**

**Naz Shah:** [\[49178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much aid the UK has provided to Pakistan for flood recovery since 2010.

**Naz Shah:**

[\[49179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much aid the UK provided to Pakistan for flooding recovery in 2010.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan as it faces the consequences of the recent devastating flooding. The UK Government provided significant support to Pakistan in response to the 2010 crisis, providing £81 million in humanitarian assistance. While the scale of the recent flooding is greater than 2010, Pakistan is better prepared and more capable in responding to complex emergencies than it was previously.

Overall, since 2010, the UK has provided £342 million in humanitarian assistance to Pakistan supporting over 8 million people following natural disasters and conflict through water and sanitation; livelihoods support; protection mechanisms and shelter.

## ■ Pakistan: Floods

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[46183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support her Department is providing to Pakistan to assist that country in tackling floods.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan, as it faces the consequences of the recent devastating flooding. The UK was one of the first countries to announce funding (£1.5m) to respond to the humanitarian need. We have now increased this to £16.5 million to support flood relief efforts. The UK contribution is also now over 10% of the joint UN and Government of Pakistan emergency appeal (\$160m). This flooding demonstrates how climate change is making extreme weather events both more intense and more frequent.

## ■ Rwanda: Asylum

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[49107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for the impact of the Government's Economic and Migration Partnership with Rwanda on the UK's international reputation of the circumstances of the death of Congolese refugee Elysee Kanyandekwe in Rwanda in 2018.

**Gillian Keegan:**

This Government is committed to our Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, which will break the business model of criminal gangs, save lives and help to tackle the global migration crisis.

We note reports of the death of Congolese refugee Elysee Kanyandekwe. Rwanda has been recognised globally for their record in welcoming and integrating migrants and asylum seekers, and our own comprehensive assessment found it to be

generally a safe and secure country. The UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership contains strong protections on the treatment of migrants.

## ■ **Somalia: Famine**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[48423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to provide further aid to Somalia for the purposes of helping to prevent a potential famine in that country.

**Gillian Keegan:**

East Africa is facing a serious humanitarian crisis and the UK will continue to do everything we can to help people who are in desperate need. This financial year, the UK will provide approximately £156 million to respond to the Humanitarian crisis in East Africa, and this is on top of the £46 million of humanitarian support that the UK contributed to Somalia last financial year. These funds are delivering lifesaving assistance to those most in need now through NGOs and the UN.

The UK is also engaging with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the Drought Envoy to provide strong leadership on the drought, raise the profile of the crisis internationally and remove impediments to humanitarian assistance. The UK continues to lever its leadership role in Somalia to lobby for more funds from the international community and non-traditional donors for the urgent response that is required now and for the funding that will be necessary for longer-term resilience.

## ■ **Somaliland: Demonstrations**

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[45822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect on (a) human rights and (b) the rule of law in Somaliland of the police and armed forces allegedly opening fire on pro-democracy campaigners on 11 August 2022.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We note reports of public disorder and the excessive use of force during the political demonstrations across Somaliland on 11 August. We have raised this issue with the Presidency and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and issued a statement calling for all sides to behave peacefully and uphold the rights to assembly and association. It is important that agreement between Somaliland stakeholders is reached on a roadmap for elections. We continue to monitor the situation and regularly raise this issue at all levels with the Somaliland Government.

We are committed to supporting the protection of human rights in Somaliland, including adherence to due process and the rule of law with regard to prisoners and the judicial system. Promoting respect for human rights is essential to enduring peace and stability. We will continue to work together with human rights defenders across Somaliland to use our collective voice to call for change.

## ■ Somaliland: Sovereignty

**Ruth Jones:** [\[49268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to recognise Somaliland as an independent state.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK, consistent with the entire international community, does not recognise Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. It is for Somaliland and Somalia to come to an agreement about their future relationship. Any new arrangements would need to be recognised by the African Union and neighbours in the region. The African Union is the pre-eminent regional body mandated to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States, of which Somalia is one. The UK encourages dialogue between Mogadishu and Hargeisa on this issue.

## ■ Sri Lanka: Development Aid

**Jim Shannon:** [\[47531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department plans to provide Sri Lanka with official overseas aid to help that country finance essential imports.

**Vicky Ford:**

The UK is providing support to Sri Lanka through multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and United Nations (UN). The World Bank (WB) has reprogrammed US\$ 400 million in financial assistance to provide economic and health sector support to Sri Lanka. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has announced US\$5 million for an urgent response to the economic crisis to support approximately 650,000 of the most vulnerable people in Sri Lanka. The UK is the largest overall donor to the CERF, contributing more than \$1.7 billion to the fund since its inception fifteen years ago.

The Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, re-iterated the UK's support to Sri Lanka when he spoke to President Wickremesinghe on 23 July and Prime Minister Gunawardena on 16 August. We keep under review our response to the humanitarian needs of the Sri Lankan people.

## ■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Visits Abroad

**Ruth Jones:** [\[49267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to visit sub-Saharan Southern Africa.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK greatly values its relationship with countries across Africa. We work closely with partners to deepen bilateral relationships across a broad range of issues including trade, infrastructure, honest, reliable investment, sharing UK expertise, as well as building geostrategic partnerships to counter malign influence. Working with

African partners is also important to tackling global challenges like food security, climate change and international peace and security. We will continue engaging with African countries at official and Ministerial level, and this will include Ministerial visits to African countries.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[49271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many departmental ministerial visits have been made to sub-Saharan Southern Africa since 2019.

**Gillian Keegan:**

There have been 22 visits to countries in the Southern Africa Development Community by Secretaries of State and Ministers from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and legacy departments Foreign Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development since the beginning of 2019.

## ■ **Togo: Commonwealth**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she had with her Commonwealth counterparts on the preparedness of Togo to join the Commonwealth of Nations.

**Vicky Ford:**

Togo was welcomed into the Commonwealth family by a consensus of all member states at the Kigali Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in June 2022. Preceding this, a detailed four step readiness assessment was undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Scotland, submitted this assessment to Commonwealth Heads of Government for consideration at the CHOGM Leaders' Retreat. Togo's accession was confirmed by the CHOGM Leaders Statement of 25 June. The UK welcomes Togo's accession to the Commonwealth, demonstrating the continued relevance and vitality of this truly global association.

## ■ **Ukraine: Children**

**Cat Smith:**

[\[45425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to disabled children in Ukraine who are unable to leave that country.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government has committed £220 million of humanitarian funding to those affected by Russia's invasion in Ukraine. The priority for UK funding is to support the most vulnerable people, including women, children, the elderly and disabled in Ukraine and in the region around Ukraine.



Our pledge includes over £140 million to UN and Red Cross Agencies, including £15 million to UNICEF and £25 million in matched funding to the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal (DEC). Our flexible funding to the UN allows them to support the most in need in Ukraine, including disabled children. More than 26 thousand children with disabilities have been reached by UNICEF cash assistance. In line with humanitarian principles, we will continue to work with our partners to prioritise support to the most in need, which will include disabled children in Ukraine.

### ■ **Ukraine: Human Trafficking**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[49659]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help ensure that vulnerable Ukrainian women and children are not trafficked into (a) sex slavery and (b) domestic servitude in (i) the UAE and (ii) in other countries.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Government is committed to tackling the crime of human trafficking. In Ukraine, as well as other countries currently hosting millions of refugees from Ukraine, we are working closely with delivery partners to protect the most vulnerable from the dangers of modern slavery. The UK has pledged £220 million in humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and the region, with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls. We are providing life-saving assistance, including targeted gender-based violence services, legal support and crisis accommodation to help tackle safeguarding concerns and trafficking risks.

### ■ **Ukraine: Russia**

**Stephen Doughty:**

**[49689]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the veracity of reports of forced relocation of Ukrainian civilians by Russia.

**Leo Docherty:**

The OSCE's second Moscow Mechanism report, published on 14 July, highlighted the forced deportation of civilians from Ukraine to Russia, including through Russia's so-called 'filtration process'. The UK condemns this practice, and in June sanctioned the Russian Children's Rights Commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova, for her alleged involvement in the forced deportation and adoption of Ukrainian children. We will continue to hold the Russian Government to account, including by supporting both Ukraine's domestic investigation into war crimes and the International Criminal Court investigation.



## ■ United Nations: Reform

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[44971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help reform the United Nations.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK supports the UN Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda' report and his efforts to make the UN system more effective, efficient, and accountable as part of his vision for UN 2.0. As part of this, the UK actively supports the UN's Resident Coordinators who are improving UN agency coordination and impact in the countries in which they operate. UK Ministers regularly meet with Resident Coordinators, and senior UN leadership such as the Deputy Secretary-General, to discuss and encourage progress on reforms

We also support reform of the UN Security Council to make it more representative and better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century.

## ■ World Food Programme

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[47485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to More than Two Million Food Insecure Sudanese to Benefit from a New Emergency Safety Net Project Supported by Development Partners through the World Bank, published by World Bank on 21 July 2022, how much funding the Government is contributing to the \$100 million disbursement to the World Food Programme.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We note the worsening humanitarian situation in Sudan as highlighted by the World Bank in its press statement of 21 July. An estimated 12 million people will face acute food insecurity this year, with over 3 million on the edge of famine. As part of our response, we and other donors have agreed with the World Bank to redirect \$100 million to the World Food Programme to address urgent food insecurity needs. The UK has contributed over £250 million in humanitarian aid to Sudan over the past five years.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Abortion: Drugs

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[49593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many women have been (a) hospitalised and (b) in ambulance care due to at-home abortion pills in the last 12 months.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ Alarms: Older People

**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[49646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the reliability of personal alarms for elderly people in the event that they are unable to afford (a) a landline or (b) credit on their mobile telephone.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Telecare services are provided by local authorities, housing associations, the third sector and commercial organisations, which determine the charges for these services and any additional financial support offered.

Local authorities may provide personal alarms at no cost to the person using the service after a care assessment or a subsequent means test. If a service user does not have a landline, global system for mobile communications telecare alarm equipment with a roaming SIM card is an alternative way of providing this service. These are being provided at no cost by some telecare services, although due to additional connection charges these alarms can be more expensive for a person meeting the cost of the service themselves.

Service providers can also directly help with landline affordability, with some using an 0300 number to minimise call charges when a telecare device makes an alarm call. A personal mobile telephone not being in credit should not impact on the reliability of an alarm as they are not typically used to provide personal alarm services.

## ■ Alcoholic Drinks: Consumption

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[49093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce harms caused by alcohol consumption.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[49199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she plans to take to reduce levels of alcohol harm; and if she will introduce a substance misuse public health strategy.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

We have an existing agenda on tackling harms from alcohol, including a programme to establish specialist alcohol care teams in hospitals. The Government published the Drug Strategy on 6 December 2021, which will invest £532 million over three years in local authority commissioned substance misuse treatment services in England. This will benefit people seeking treatment for alcohol misuse as alcohol and drug services are jointly commissioned.

## ■ Ambulance Services: Emergency Calls

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[45578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the triage and call categorisation scripts used by NHS Ambulance Trust call handlers.

**Robert Jenrick:**

No recent assessment has been made.

There are currently two systems approved in England for 999 call triage: NHS Pathways and the Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch System. The licences issued with each approved 999 triage system states the training requirements and these standards must be met by the call handler before they are able to take calls. This is the responsibility of the ambulance trust and regular audits are taken on call handling and outcomes to maintain trusts' accreditation status.

## ■ Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates: Regulation

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[49105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 June 2022 to Question 7493 on Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates: Regulation, if she will set out a timetable for bringing forward legislative proposals on the regulation of physician associates and anaesthesia associates; and if she will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We plan to publish the public consultation on the draft legislation which will enable the General Medical Council (GMC) to regulate physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) in the autumn. Following this consultation, we will finalise the legislation to be laid in the second half of 2023, subject to Parliamentary time. The GMC will then develop and implement its rules and processes for regulating PAs and AAs within 12 months, enabling regulation to commence in the second half of 2024.

## ■ Antidepressants: Alcoholism

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[49783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the medical effect of prescribing (a) citalopram and (b) other antidepressants to people with alcoholism.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

No specific assessment has been made. General practitioners or other responsible clinicians work with patients to decide the clinically appropriate course of treatment for individuals.

**■ Antimicrobials: Procurement****Martyn Day:** [\[48425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to develop a UK-wide policy for the purchase and evaluation of antimicrobials following the announcement of a subscription deal for two antimicrobials for the NHS in England; what timeframe has been agreed for that process; and what opportunities will be in place for (a) the UK and (b) international stakeholders to contribute to that process.

**Martyn Day:** [\[48426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if her Department will take steps to ensure that the template for a subscription model for the purchase and evaluation of antimicrobials, following a deal for the NHS in England, can be adopted by other countries.

**Robert Jenrick:**

In July 2019, a pilot project was launched to develop and test a 'subscription-style' evaluation and payment model for antibiotics in England, which would pay pharmaceutical companies for access to antibiotics based on its value to the National Health Service, rather than the volume used. This payment model aims to incentivise pharmaceutical companies to develop new antimicrobials, despite the potential for the use of newly developed antibiotics to be 'held back' to protect against the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

Payments from NHS England to the two pharmaceutical companies involved in the pilot commenced on 1 July 2022. Officials are now considering how to develop the new frameworks for the evaluation and payment of new antimicrobials, including through consultation with domestic and international stakeholders. The consultation process will continue until spring 2023.

In June 2022, the previous Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (the Rt hon. Steve Barclay MP) invited health ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to engage in this process and assist in the evolution of this model. The devolved administrations have agreed in principle and officials in the United Kingdom will finalise the details of each nation's participation. It will be for each devolved administration to decide if or how any agreed frameworks are implemented in their health system.

To support the adoption of similar models in other countries, findings from the pilot project have been published online and shared at international conferences. The Government has also advocated for such models internationally, such as during the UK's 2021 G7 Presidency, where health and finance ministers have committed to explore options to bring new antimicrobials to market.

## ■ Autism: Health Services

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[49582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to ensure that autistic people are supported in later life.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The 'National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026', published on 21 July 2021, sets out how we will improve outcomes for older autistic people. This includes the introduction of mandatory training for health and social care staff on learning disability and autism, including those who work with older adults.

NHS England is supporting the development of an autism specific health check for adults and a study is currently underway by Newcastle University to test its effectiveness at identifying additional health needs in autistic people. This has been established to address the health inequalities faced by autistic people and should the study prove successful, NHS England is committed to further testing with the aim of deployment in primary care.

The Chief Social Worker, in partnership with the British Association of Social Workers, has published practice guidance to improve social work practice with autistic people, including older autistic people. This will help autistic people, including older autistic people, access appropriate care and support.

## ■ Bone Marrow Disorders: Diagnosis

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with essential thrombocythaemia in the UK in the last three years.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ Bowel Cancer

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[49135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the reasons for a lower survival rate for colorectal cancer in the UK compared with the European average; and what steps she is taking to improve the five year relative survival rate for colorectal cancer.

**Will Quince:**

No assessment has been made. However, the NHS Cancer Programme aims to improve cancer survival in all cancers to meet the NHS Long Term Plan's ambition that by 2028, 55,000 more people each year will survive their cancer for at least five years after diagnosis.

The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP) aims to support earlier diagnosis of bowel cancers by finding cancer at an earlier stage or by detecting

changes in the bowel which could lead to cancer if left untreated among people aged 60 to 74 years old. The BCSP invites approximately 4.5 million people to take part in screening each year and reduces the risk of dying from bowel cancer by 25% in those who participate. The NHS is currently expanding the bowel screening programme in England to offer the home testing faecal immunochemical test kit to 58 year-olds.

A recent National Health Service 'Help us help you' campaign focused on the barriers to earlier presentation in all cancer types and aimed to address some underlying challenges to earlier diagnosis. A campaign for abdominal and urological symptoms is planned later this year, which will address symptoms relevant to bowel cancer. The impact of Deborah James' campaign also increased the number of visits to the NHS website's bowel cancer symptoms page. A Best Practice Timed Pathway for suspected bowel cancer has been developed which outlines the timings of clinical steps in order to reach a diagnosis or rule out cancer within 28 days of referral.

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[49136]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the prevalence of colorectal cancers in (a) the North East and (b) rest of the country; what assessment she has made of the reasons for potential disparities; and what steps she is taking to reduce disparities.

**Will Quince:**

There are many factors which affect the risk of developing cancer, including age, genetic factors and lifestyle factors. Geographic variation in the distribution of these factors could influence disease incidence. Efforts to support cancer prevention and improve the health of people and communities may help to reduce variation in cancer incidence.

The Northern Cancer Alliance commissions and supports cancer awareness workers in the North East and North Cumbria to work in communities, especially those affected by health inequalities, to promote the uptake of bowel screening and highlight cancer prevention messages, including healthy eating.

Bowel screening uptake in Newcastle and the North East has improved in recent years since the introduction of the faecal immunochemical test (FIT). This test is easier to use and more sensitive in detecting bowel conditions which need further investigation and treatment. The implementation of FIT in primary care for people with colorectal symptoms has been supported by raising community awareness and increased uptake and sensitivity of bowel cancer screening. Work also continues to ensure equitable access to the test including support for people with visual impairment and people without English as a first language. The regional learning disability network is also ensuring that people with learning disabilities are offered support alongside the offer of screening.

## ■ Bowel Cancer: Disease Control

**Martyn Day:**

**[49738]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to reduce levels of bowel cancer in the UK.

**Will Quince:**

Since 2019, the National Health Service Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (BCSP) in England has issued a faecal immunochemical test (FIT) kit to eligible people for use at home, which can detect changes in the bowel which, if left untreated, could lead to cancer. The FIT kit requires one sample to be taken and replaced the previous test which required three samples, which has increased uptake in England.

The FIT home testing kit is currently available to everyone aged 60 to 74 years old and the majority of 56-year-olds. The NHS BCSP is expanding the FIT kit offer to 58-year-olds and the programme will be offered to all those aged 50 to 74 years old by 2025. In 2023, an NHS bowel cancer screening communications and marketing campaign is planned to increase the uptake of the FIT home testing kit in eligible people across England.

Obesity can increase the likelihood of developing bowel cancer therefore we have introduced measures to help people to achieve and maintain a healthier weight. New Regulations on out-of-home calorie labelling for out of home food sold in large businesses including restaurants, cafes and takeaways came into force on 6 April 2022. These aim to ensure people can make more informed, healthier choices when eating food out or ordering takeaways. We are also working to make the food and drink that is available to consumers healthier through reformulation programmes.

Reducing tobacco use and supporting smokers to quit can prevent 15 types of cancers, including bowel cancer. An independent review of the Government's tobacco control policies led by Javed Khan, published on 9 June 2022, makes recommendations to support the Government's ambition for England to be smoke-free by 2030. We are currently considering the recommendations to inform a new Tobacco Control Plan.

## ■ Brain and Cardiovascular System: Health

**Jim Shannon:**

**[49663]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she has had recent discussions with medical professionals on the link between heart and brain health.

**Will Quince:**

There have been no specific discussions.



## ■ Clinical Trials: Standards

**Alex Sobel:** [\[45435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Life science competitiveness indicators published in July 2022, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the median time from clinical trial application to the first patient receiving a first dose for a subset of commercial trials.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[45598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Life Science competitiveness indicators 2022, published in July 2022, what assessment he has made of the performance of the UK in the metric for median time from clinical trial application and the first patient receiving a first dose for a subset of commercial trials.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The annual Life Sciences competitiveness indicators have highlighted that trial establishment times in the United Kingdom are slower than several of our competitors. In 2022, indicators showed that the median time was 247 days for a subset of commercial trials, with the UK ranked seventh out of 10. In March 2021, we published 'Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery' which highlighted improving the speed and efficiency of study set-up. This is being taken forward through the Recovery Resilience and Growth Programme. The Programme's delivery partners are simplifying and streamlining processes to improve the median time from clinical application and first patient.

In 2021, a combined review by the Health Research Authority (HRA) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) reduced approval times for clinical trials to 61 days, compared to 90 days for those that did not go through combined review. 'The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2022 to 2025 implementation plan', published on 30 June 2022, includes actions designed to improve set-up times over the remainder of this Parliament, including:

- Implementing the UK-wide National Contract Value Review for commercial research to ensure costing does not delay study set-up in the National Health Service;
- Introduction of a single UK approval service to replace the HRA and Health Care Research Wales' approval and equivalent processes in Northern Ireland and Scotland; and
- Further development of the Integrated Research Application System by the HRA and the MHRA to streamline health technology and medicines research.

## ■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients

**Munira Wilson:** [\[49281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department collects data on the average length of time patients detained under the Mental Health Act who are admitted to Section 136 suites spend in those units before being transferred to specialist mental health wards.



**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ **Coronavirus: Medical Treatments**

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[47568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) size and (b) membership of the RAPID C-19 Oversight Group.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[47667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a list of members of the Rapid C-19 Oversight Group.

**Robert Jenrick:**

A list of the membership of the RAPID C-19 is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. RAPID C-19 oversight group membership [\[RAPID-C19-oversight-group-membership.docx\]](#)

■ **Dementia: Clinical Trials**

**Dr James Davies:**

[49731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) phase I, (b) phase II and (c) phase III clinical trials for dementia have been hosted in Wales in each of the last 10 years.

**Neale Hanvey:**

[49792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care how many (a) phase one, (b) phase two and (c) phase three clinical trials for dementia treatments have taken place in (i) England, (ii) Wales, and (iii) Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The information requested on clinical trials hosted in Wales and Scotland is not held centrally. A table showing the number of phase one, two and three clinical trials supported by the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research Clinical Research Network in England for dementia from 2012/13 to 2021/22 is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Dementia clinical trials in England 2012 to 2022 [\[Formatted TABLE PQ 49792 attachment.docx\]](#)

■ **Dementia: Ethnic Groups**

**Bob Blackman:**

[45685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that accurate data is collected on the number of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic people who are diagnosed with dementia.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The monthly Recorded Dementia Diagnoses data includes counts of patients with a diagnosis of dementia on their general practitioner patient record by sub-integrated care board location, which also records ethnicity. Monthly data releases are available at the following link: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/recorded-dementia-diagnoses>

**Bob Blackman:**[\[45780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to provide dedicated community link workers to help improve (a) awareness and understanding of dementia and (b) access to dementia services in ethnic minority communities.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for services and support for people with dementia, including the provision of community link workers. NHS England expects ICBs to commission services which take into account relevant guidance, including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines and the Dementia Care Pathway, to improve the delivery and quality of care and support.

**■ Dementia: Health Services****Bob Blackman:**[\[45686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that memory assessment services offer culturally appropriate support.

**Neil O'Brien:**

NHS England commissioned Leeds Beckett University to develop a guide to supporting continuous development, improvement and innovation in memory services. The guide highlights considerations to address in the provision of personalised, culturally appropriate services including communication/language, testing and assessments. The guide was published March 2022 and is available at the following link: <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/-/media/files/research/dementia/taking-memory-assessment-services-into-future-web.pdf>

**■ Dementia: Research****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2022 to Question 21192 on Dementia: Research, what funding her Department will make available to deliver the moonshot in each of the next five years.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We are unable to provide the specific information requested as expenditure in the next five years will be determined by research applications received by the National Institute for Health and Care Research and UK Research and Innovation.

## ■ Dental Services: Bridlington

**Sir Greg Knight:**

**[49080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will investigate the current provision of orthodontic services in Bridlington following the closure of the Bridlington Orthodontic Centre; what assurances she has received from NHS England that they have made alternative provision for all those effected thereby; and if she will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England recently undertook a procurement for orthodontic services in the Northern region due to the conclusion of previous contracts. Under the Public Contract Regulations 2015, NHS England is required to re-procure time limited contracts.

Through this procurement process, a number of providers have secured contracts to provide orthodontic services. If a child's orthodontic practice was unsuccessful in this procurement or did not submit a bid, it was offered the opportunity to conclude any treatment already commenced. Where the practice did not continue any National Health Service treatment beyond the end date of its contract, it has been necessary to transfer patients to another orthodontic practice.

NHS England is working with new providers to transfer patients for ongoing treatment, mobilise the new contracts and confirm all allocated providers for patients. Patients are being contacted by the new providers and offered appointments.

## ■ Dental Services: Care Homes

**Peter Gibson:**

**[45301]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps have been taken to ensure accessibility of home visits by dentists for care home residents.

**Will Quince:**

Dentists and other professionals face no restrictions when visiting to provide a service for care home residents. Where there is an active outbreak of COVID-19 in a care home, a risk assessment should be made. From 1 July 2022, all National Health Service dentists have been asked to deliver the full NHS commitment, including delivering services in care homes where commissioned to do so.

## ■ Dental Services: Hertfordshire

**Bim Afolami:**

**[45995]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help improve access to NHS dental services for new patients in Hertfordshire.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England asked dental and orthodontic practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July 2022, including in Hertfordshire. Many contractors are already delivering at 100% of contracted activity.

National Health Service commissioners in the East of England will shortly publish an expression of interest exercise to understand the current capacity of providers in the region, including Hertfordshire. Where there is capacity, NHS England plans to offer additional non-recurrent activity to support patients to access NHS dental services.

■ **Dental Services: Waiting Lists**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[49594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people are waiting to be registered with an NHS dentist in (a) Romford, (b) Havering, and (c) the United Kingdom.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is not held centrally, as appointments for National Health Service treatment are managed directly by dental practices.

■ **Dentistry: East of England**

**James Wild:** [\[46169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for new dentistry schools in (a) Norfolk and (b) East Anglia.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are no current plans to open new dentistry schools in Norfolk and East Anglia. However, Health Education England is working with the Department and NHS England to consider options to increase training capacity, such as the centres for dental development proposed in the Advancing Dental Care Review.

■ **Dentistry: Training**

**James Wild:** [\[46167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which applications for new dental schools have been approved by Health Education England in each of the last five years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Health Education England has not approved any applications for new dental schools over the last five years. It is the responsibility of the General Dental Council to approve any new dental school.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[47427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There were no reports of fraud using Departmental electronic purchasing cards in the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Energy****Ruth Jones:**[\[46122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department spent on energy in each of the last three years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The following table shows the Department's expenditure on gas and electricity in each of last three years.

Year Gas Electricity

2019/2020 £134,173 £1,398,290

2020/2021 £215,306 £1,654,409

2021/2022 £322,026 £1,969,005

**■ Dialysis Machines: Finance****Carolyn Harris:**[\[45933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has provided for the provision of home dialysis to each NHS trust in England in the last 12 months.

**Carolyn Harris:**[\[45934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of the funding his Department provided for the provision of home dialysis to NHS trusts in England was passed on to patients in the last 12 months.

**Will Quince:**

This information requested on funding in 2022 is not currently held centrally.

However, in 2021/22, NHS England provided approximately £117 million to renal providers in England for the provision of home dialysis therapy. This is inclusive of haemodialysis and all modalities of peritoneal dialysis. The following table shows funding provided by NHS England to each specialist renal provider in England in 2021/22.

Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust £996,247

Barts Health NHS Trust £9,873,038

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £841,162

Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £1,297,309

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £510,650

Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust £933,545  
East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust £1,832,292  
East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust £2,210,524  
East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust £919,822  
Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust £3,800,712  
Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £135,252  
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust £3,191,945  
Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust £1,344,022  
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust £6,704,239  
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust £5,583,181  
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £2,356,531  
Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust £1,806,242  
Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £1,772,510  
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust £4,634,713  
Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust £2,668,753  
Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £1,430,263  
North Bristol NHS Trust £2,128,904  
North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust £731,871  
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust £3,111,524  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £2,169,549  
Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust £4,819,664  
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust £1,483,022  
Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust £2,091,381  
Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust £5,252,797  
Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust £2,718,068  
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £3,413,902  
Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust £2,027,726  
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £857,527  
South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust £1,294,611  
St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £1,699,134  
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust £976,574

The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust £1,843,691

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust £2,340,870

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust £5,578,386

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust £2,410,502

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation  
Trust £3,127,492

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust £4,318,784

University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust £3,006,318

University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust £836,807

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust £2,199,773

York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust £1,056,816

Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust £267,484

Total £116,606,127

The information requested on funding passed to patients is not held centrally as renal providers have local arrangements in place with patients to facilitate reimbursement.

## ■ Doctors and Nurses

**Mark Tami:**

[\[45730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) nurses and (b) doctors were employed in the NHS in England in (i) the fourth quarter of 2019, and (ii) the second quarter of 2022, excluding those on the temporary register set up to assist with the covid-19 outbreak.

**Robert Jenrick:**

This information is not held in the format requested.

Statistics on the National Health Service workforce are published by NHS Digital and measure staff in permanent positions. The data for these statistics is collected from the Electronic Staff Record, the human resources and payroll system for the NHS. Staff who joined the workforce on a COVID-19 temporary register would be recorded in the same way as staff on a permanent register.

## ■ Doctors: Recruitment and Vacancies

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[47610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the vacancy rate for NHS doctors; and what steps he is taking to promote careers in the NHS.

**Robert Jenrick:**

NHS Digital publishes quarterly vacancy statistics in hospital trusts in the National Health Service in England. As of June 2022, there are 10,582 full-time equivalent medical vacancies, or 7.3% of the workforce. Vacancy rates measure the difference between a trust's staff in post and its funded establishment and as such some of the vacancies will be filled by bank and agency or locum staff. The NHS Health Careers website provides information on the career opportunities open to individuals who wish to undertake a career in the NHS.

**Doctors: Workplace Pensions****Julian Sturdy:**[\[45808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to remove the annual allowance from the pension scheme for NHS doctors; and if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the existing pension scheme on the retention of doctors in the NHS.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Departmental officials have regular discussions with the British Medical Association's pension committee chair on tax and other pension matters. While the level of taxation and tax allowances are matters for HM Treasury, the Government is reviewing the interaction between taxation and pensions in the National Health Service.

**Emergency Calls and NHS 111****Munira Wilson:**[\[45587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of levels of public knowledge of (a) the roles and purposes of 999 and NHS 111 and (b) when it is appropriate to contact each service respectively.

**Robert Jenrick:**

No formal assessment has been made.

**Evusheld****Catherine West:**[\[47625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will make a decision on the availability of Evusheld covid-19 vaccine for immunocompromised people.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government has decided not to procure Evusheld for prevention through emergency routes at this time. This is a decision based on independent clinical advice by the multi-agency initiative, RAPID C-19 and a national expert policy working group. These groups considered a range of evidence, including clinical trial data, in vitro analysis and emerging observational studies and concluded there is currently insufficient evidence of benefit to recommend deployment. The Chief Medical Officer for England is content that the correct process for providing clinical



advice has been followed and agree that this should now be referred to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for further evaluation.

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[49297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the UK Health Security Agency of the effectiveness of the drug Evusheld against the Omicron variant of covid-19; and if she will make that treatment available on the NHS to people who are immunocompromised.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government has decided not to procure Evusheld for prevention through emergency routes at this time. This is a decision based on independent clinical advice by the multi-agency RAPID C-19 and a national expert policy working group, which considered a range of evidence, including clinical trial data, in vitro analysis and emerging observational studies. It concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence of benefit to recommend deployment at this time. The Chief Medical Officer for England is content that the correct process for providing clinical advice has been followed and agrees that it should now be referred to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for further evaluation.

The Department wrote to patient groups on 5 September 2022 with information on this decision and evidence considered. The Department intends to publish further details of the clinical advice received shortly.

#### ■ **Evusheld: Clinical Trials**

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[47600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to expand the availability of Evusheld as a prophylactic through clinical trials.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Department's clinical advisors have recommended a trial of Evusheld is considered to examine a link between in vitro tests and clinical outcomes for current and future variants and evaluate the effectiveness and safety of a dose of 600 milligrams, which was not tested in the randomised controlled trials. The Department will therefore explore options for a clinical trial.

#### ■ **Evusheld: Procurement**

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[47497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government took account of the recent Israeli study on the efficacy of Evusheld, published on 29 July 2022, as part of its decision on whether to procure Evusheld.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government has decided not to procure Evusheld for prevention through emergency routes at this time. This is a decision based on independent clinical advice by the multi-agency initiative, RAPID C-19 and a national expert policy

working group. These groups considered a range of evidence, including clinical trial data, in vitro analysis and emerging observational studies and concluded there is currently insufficient evidence of benefit to recommend deployment. The Chief Medical Officer for England is content that the correct process for providing clinical advice has been followed and agree that this should now be referred to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for further evaluation.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[47604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide the names of the experts who were consulted on the Government's decision, announced on 12 August 2022, not to purchase any doses of Evusheld at this time.

**Robert Jenrick:**

This decision is based on independent clinical advice by multi-agency RAPID C-19 group and a national expert policy working group and reflects the epidemiological context and policies in the Government's pandemic response and recovery. The National Health Service had overall responsibility for establishing RAPID C-19 and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence chairs the senior RAPID C-19 Group and provides secretariat support.

Information on the bodies participating in RAPID C-19 is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/covid-19/rapid-c19>

A list of the individual members of RAPID C-19 is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. RAPID C-19 oversight group membership [\[RAPID-C19-oversight-group-membership.docx\]](#)

**Daisy Cooper:**

[47664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish all evidence provided by immunologists to inform the decision not to procure Evusheld.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government has decided not to procure Evusheld for prevention through emergency routes at this time. This is a decision based on independent clinical advice by the multi-agency initiative, RAPID C-19 and a national expert policy working group. These groups considered a range of evidence, including clinical trial data, in vitro analysis and emerging observational studies and concluded there is currently insufficient evidence of benefit to recommend deployment. The Chief Medical Officer for England is content that the correct process for providing clinical advice has been followed and agree that this should now be referred to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for further evaluation.

The Department intends to publish further details of the clinical advice received shortly.

## ■ Fungi: Infectious Diseases

**John Spellar:**

**[45704]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of (a) patients admitted to hospital and (b) patients receiving medical treatment following a fungal infection in each of the last 3 years.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

This information is not held in the format requested. However, the following table shows the number of person IDs with a primary diagnosis of fungal infection and finished admission episodes (FAEs) and finished consultant episodes (FCEs) where a main procedure took place in 2019/20 and 2020/21 in English National Health Service hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector.

YEAR	NUMBER OF PERSON IDS WITH A	
	NUMBER OF PERSON IDS WITH A PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS	NUMBER OF PERSON IDS WITH A PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS WITH A PROCEDURE
2019/20	7,638	5,483
2020/21	5,224	3,674

Source: NHS Digital

Notes:

1. Person IDs. The Master Person Service (MPS) person identifier. This is a unique identifier for each individual patient, generated via the MPS. This identifier replaces the HESID field and allows an individual's care to be tracked across years and continuous periods to be identified.
2. Primary Diagnosis. The primary diagnosis is the first of up to 20 (14 from 2002/03 to 2006/07 and seven prior to 2002/03) diagnosis fields in the Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data set and provides the main reason why the patient was admitted to hospital.
3. ICD-10 coding and description. The following ICD-10 codes are indexed under the term 'fungal infection':
  - B49.X Unspecified mycosis
  - B20.5 HIV disease resulting in other mycoses
  - B35.0 Tinea barbae and tinea capitis
  - B35.1 Tinea unguium
  - B35.2 Tinea manuum
  - B35.3 Tinea pedis
  - B35.6 Tinea cruris

- B36.9 Superficial mycosis, unspecified
- B48.7 Opportunistic mycoses

Research indicates that fungal infections are also known as mycosis, therefore the ICD-10 block B35-B49 Mycoses may be pertinent and has also been included in the data. It should be noted that there may be other codes within the ICD-10 classification which maybe applicable to the condition.

1. A FAE is the first period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FAEs are counted against the year or month in which the admission episode finishes. Admissions do not represent the number of patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the period.
2. A FCE is a continuous period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FCEs are counted against the year in which it ends. Figures do not represent the number of different patients, as a person may have more than one episode of care within the same stay in hospital or in different stays in the same year.
3. Main procedure. The first recorded procedure or intervention in each episode, usually the most resource intensive procedure or intervention performed during the episode. It is appropriate to use main procedure when looking at admission details, for example, time waited, while a more complete count of episodes with a particular procedure is obtained by looking at the main and the secondary procedures. It should be noted that some patients are treated for a fungal infection condition during an outpatient appointment. However, diagnoses are extremely seldom recorded in outpatient records, therefore it is not possible to provide useful data from the outpatient data set.
4. HES figures are available from 1989/90 onwards. Changes to the figures over time should be interpreted in the context of improvements in data quality and coverage particularly in earlier years, improvements in coverage of independent sector activity (particularly from 2006-07) and changes in NHS practice. For example, apparent reductions in activity may be due to a number of procedures which may now be undertaken in outpatient settings and so no longer include in admitted patient HES data. Conversely, apparent increases in activity may be due to improved recording of diagnosis or procedure information.

Data is also held on total systemic antifungal prescribing in NHS hospital trusts recorded as defined daily doses (DDDs) per 1,000 admissions per day in 2020. The total consumption of antifungals in NHS acute trusts in 2020 was 0.63 DDDs per 1,000 admissions per day. This is a 21% increase in the rate of prescribing from 2019. The collection of the NHS England's antifungal commissioning for quality and innovation data was interrupted by COVID-19.

**John Spellar:**

**[45705]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential risks posed by treatment resistant fungal infections.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

Misuse and overuse of antimicrobials, such as fungal agents, is a factor in the development of drug-resistant pathogens. NHS England's national pharmacy and prescribing clinical lead is supported by seven regional antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) leads. These AMS leads collaborate with regional National Health Service stakeholders and partner organisations, including infection prevention and control, patient safety, diagnostics and sepsis teams, the Department, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Health Education England and the Care Quality Commission, to contribute to multi-professional endeavours to mitigate the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

NHS England's AMR diagnostics team advise that high-level research has been undertaken to understand the need for optimal fungal diagnostics and resistance testing. This has highlighted opportunities for improvement in data collection regarding the use of diagnostics, surveillance and consistent access to diagnostics.

The UKHSA reports on antifungal resistance against systemic antifungals utilised in the treatment of candidaemia, in the English Surveillance Programme for Antimicrobial Utilisation and Resistance report. Resistance to the key antifungals, amphotericin B, caspofungin and fluconazole, appears to have been decreasing in all *Candida* species. Fluconazole resistance decreased from 8.2% of *Candida* blood isolates tested in 2016 to 3.2% in 2020. Resistance to amphotericin B and caspofungin decreased slightly from 2016 to 2020, by 1.3% to 1.1%, and 3.4% to 3.3% respectively.

**■ Gastrointestinal System: Diseases****Chi Onwurah:**[\[49134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of regional disparities in the prevalence of bowel disease; and what steps she is taking to (a) support patients, (b) educate communities and (c) improve prevention and treatment of bowel diseases in (i) Newcastle and (ii) the North East.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No specific assessment has been made.

**■ Gastrointestinal System: Surgery****Chi Onwurah:**[\[49137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data the Government holds on the (a) number and distribution of stomas across the UK and (b) type of stoma and patient need; and what those figures and details are for the North East.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are three main types of stoma related to the digestive and urinary system: colostomy, ileostomy, and urostomy.

The following table shows a count of completed surgical procedures for colostomy, ileostomy and urostomy undertaken within all National Health Service-funded hospital

providers in England from 2017/18 to 2020/21. This does not represent a count of people, as the same person could have the same procedure on more than one occasion.

2017/18 2018/19 2019/20 2020/21

Colostomy 593 547 498 418

Ileostomy 563 498 472 451

Urostomy 2,013 1,856 1,784 1,020

Total 3,169 2,901 2,754 1,889

Source: NHS Digital, Hospital Episode Statistics

Some stomas are temporary and can be reversed. This data shows the total numbers that were introduced across the period. However, some of these may subsequently have been reversed. Data at a sub-national level has disclosure controls applied to protect patient confidentiality.

#### ■ General Practitioners: Feltham and Heston

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[49686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the average waiting time for a GP appointment in Feltham and Heston constituency in the latest period for which data is available; and what steps her department is taking to reduce GP waiting times.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

In July 2022, excluding COVID-19 vaccinations, 44.3% of general practice appointments in England took place on the same day as it was booked, with 72.3% within seven days. We are investing least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 by increasing and diversifying the workforce.

#### ■ General Practitioners: Slough

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[45982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase the number of face-to-face appointments with General Practitioners available in Slough.

**Will Quince:**

Excluding COVID-19 vaccinations, in July 2022 55.8% of appointments in the Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) area were conducted face-to-face, compared to 50.1% in July 2021.

In Slough, NHS Frimley ICB has worked with Primary Care Networks and general practitioner (GP) practices to increase capacity, including for the provision of routine

and urgent same-day face-to-face appointments. NHS Frimley ICB has also provided access to additional GP appointments in one central location through all Slough GP practices, to maximise the available workforce to all registered patients. GP and nurse appointments are also available during weekday evenings and weekends at five hub locations in Slough.

Remote appointments via the telephone or online, can provide additional choice and flexibility for some patients where appropriate for their needs. We are investing at least £1.5 billion to expand and diversify the workforce to create 50 million additional appointments nationally by 2024.

## ■ Genito-urinary Medicine

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[49602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she will publish the sexual and reproductive health action plan.

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[49603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department will make available additional funding to assist with the implementation of the sexual and reproductive health action plan.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

Further information on the publication of the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) action plan will be available in due course. We are currently consulting with stakeholders on the actions for the SRH plan to improve outcomes in England and complement 'Towards Zero: the HIV Action Plan for England - 2022 to 2025', published in 2021.

No additional funding is currently planned for the implementation of the SRH action plan. We are considering the availability of existing funding and how this can deliver on priority actions, including through the Public Health Grant. We have allocated more than £3.4 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services in 2022/23, including SRH services.

## ■ Health Professions: Training

**Dr Philippa Whitford:** [\[45023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that health and care staff have the training required to support (a) people who are dying and (b) the families and friends of those people.

**Neil O'Brien:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for West Ham (Ms Lyn Brown) on 26 July 2022 to Question UIN 38579.



**■ Health: Equality****Rachael Maskell:** [\[49198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans she has to bring forward a health disparities white paper.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The Department has committed to publish a health disparities white paper and further information will be available in due course.

**■ HIV Infection****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[49754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department is taking steps to help reduce the number of people living with HIV who have missing evidence of viral suppression in England.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

Automated validation of data received by the HIV and AIDS reporting system is undertaken annually at the point of submission from HIV outpatient clinics and data of poor quality is returned to the relevant clinic for correction. In addition, records relating to patients with missing information are returned to clinics for completion to improve viral load completeness and other information during data cleaning exercises for the annual clinical outcome dashboard.

**■ Hospitals: Air Pollution****Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[45666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the impact that the levels of air pollution outside hospitals has on the health of patients.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

No specific assessment has been made.

**■ Hospitals: Kingston upon Hull****Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[45474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase NHS staffing levels in hospitals in Hull.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Local National Health Service trusts are responsible for managing staffing levels and recruiting the appropriate number of health professionals required to meet local service need. In the Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff has decreased by 49 or 0.6% through the transfer of approximately 280 staff from Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust to York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in November 2021. The number of FTE staff has increased by 731 or 10.5% since May 2010, which includes

an increase in the number of doctors by 314 or 38.2% since May 2010. The number of FTE nurses and health visitors has increased in the last year by 80 or 3.9%.

Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust has offered 146 posts to adult nurse students and 20 posts to paediatric nurse students predominantly from the University of Hull to commence in September and October 2022. In addition, the Trust has employed 340 international nurses since 2018 and are recruiting a further 60 in 2022/23. A schools engagement programme is promoting National Health Service careers to students in Hull and East Yorkshire and a partnership is in place with a local sixth form college to provide a health and social care academy.

#### ■ **Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust: Accident and Emergency Departments**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[45356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce Accident & Emergency waiting times at Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

**Robert Jenrick:**

In order to mitigate the impact of the number of admitted patients who no longer have medical Criteria to Reside and cannot be swiftly discharged on accident and emergency services, Humber and North Integrated Care Board held a winter planning summit in August to identify actions and risks on patient flow and system pressures.

Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust is examining measures to improve average length of stay within acute wards to improve flow from the emergency department; identify actions with ambulance service and system partners to improve ambulance handover times; change clinical pathways to turn around more patients on the same day; and improve morning discharges. The Trust has also opened approximately 100 additional beds to support the management of No Criteria to Reside patients.

#### ■ **Infectious Diseases: Disease Control**

**Beth Winter:**

[\[45531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the World Health Organisation on progress towards a new convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response; whether the target for agreeing this remains May 2024; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The United Kingdom is working with international partners on an instrument on pandemic preparedness and responses, including at the most recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB). This is the Member State-led process for drafting and negotiating the pandemic instrument, held during the week commencing 18 July 2022. Officials from the Department of Health and Social Care and the

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office participated in discussions with Member States and representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The next meeting of the INB is scheduled for the 5 to 7 December 2022, with the aim of agreeing this instrument in May 2024 at the World Health Assembly. The UK will use inter-sessional time between meetings to engage further with Member States and WHO officials, including at forthcoming WHO regional committees.

### ■ Junior Doctors: Pay

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[45809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of awarding NHS junior doctors a higher pay rise than set out in the agreed 2019 four-year pay settlement in the context of the rising cost of living.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[45810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact on retention of junior doctors by the NHS of limiting 2022 pay rises to the amount set out in the 2019 four-year pay settlement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Junior doctors have a pre-existing multi-year pay and contract reform deal agreed with the trade union. As well as setting annual pay increases, the deal made improvements to terms and conditions and further strengthened safety and rest limits. Alongside investment in pay, the Government has also invested £90 million to create a new higher pay point for the most experienced junior doctors, increase allowances for those working the most frequently at weekends, enhance eligibility for night shift pay and create a £1,000 a year allowance for junior doctors working less than full time to help with the cost of training. The multi-year deal ends in 2023 and the Government will consider next year's pay increase with evidence on recruitment and retention.

### ■ Junior Doctors: Training

**Munira Wilson:** [\[44994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of training placements for junior doctors that will be funded in London in (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are currently more than 11,000 medical training posts in London or 18% of the national total. The medical training workforce plans for 2023/24 and 2024/2025 are currently being completed with final numbers being confirmed in the autumn. Workforce plans from 2025/26 onwards will be determined by the outcome of future spending reviews.

## ■ London Ambulance Service: ICT

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[46162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times the London Ambulance Service has experienced computer system failures in (a) one and (b) more than one of its control centres in the last (a) 30 days, (b) six months, and (c) twelve months; and how many of these failures were associated with high call volumes.

**Robert Jenrick:**

NHS England advises that the London Ambulance Service NHS Trust has experienced one computer system failure in the last 30 days; three computer system failures in the last six months; and four computer system failures in the last 12 months, inclusively.

Computer system failures have been defined as an IT failure which has been declared as a business continuity incident by the Trust at its two Emergency Operations Centres. None of the incidents were associated with high call volumes.

## ■ Long Covid: Young People

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of the proportion of (a) men and (b) women under the age of 30 who suffer from long covid.

**Will Quince:**

No specific estimate has been made. The Department uses estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics on the prevalence of ongoing symptoms following COVID-19 infection in the United Kingdom. Estimates are based on the self-reporting of ongoing symptoms by study participants rather than a clinical diagnosis.

## ■ Meat Products: Preservatives

**Martyn Day:**

[\[49737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to reduce levels of nitrites in meat products.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) works with the food industry to ensure that nitrites and nitrates are used at the lowest possible levels to achieve its technological function, without jeopardising the safety of food. Maximum legal limits for nitrates have been determined based on scientific evaluation and are monitored through risk-based compliance checks. There are no plans to reduce the levels of nitrates in processed meat products.

The FSA will seek independent scientific advice whenever new credible scientific studies emerge, which will be considered with existing evidence and determine whether any further action on authorised food additives is necessary.

**Members: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:** [\[49103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she plans to respond to the letter of 24 June 2022 from the hon. member for West Lancashire on staffing levels in clinical radiology and clinical oncology, reference ZA60022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We replied to the hon. Member on 19 August 2022.

**Midwives: Recruitment****Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[45354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to develop a long-term workforce strategy for the NHS which will support the recruitment and retention of midwives.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan and its key conclusions will be available in due course. In 2022/23, NHS England will invest £127 million in the National Health Service maternity workforce and improving neonatal care. This is in addition to £95 million invested in the recruitment of a further 1,200 midwifery and 100 consultant obstetrician posts.

The Government also committed to expand midwifery training places by 3,650 in the four years to 2022/23. To support student midwives in training, the Government has made a non-repayable training grant available of at least £5,000 per academic year for eligible midwifery students. The number of applicants for nursing and midwifery courses in England has increased in each of the last three years and there has been a 21% increase in applicants compared with this period in 2021.

The NHS People Plan focuses on supporting staff health and wellbeing, including through flexible working and a renewed commitment to tackling inequality. In addition, the NHS Retention Programme includes targeted intervention aimed at nurses and midwives at different career stages. All NHS organisations are prioritising the delivery of five actions to impact on early career, experience at work and late career staff and maximising the retention and experience of nursing and midwifery staff.

**Monkeypox: Vaccination****Anneliese Dodds:** [\[49245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the UK Health Security Agency plans to release its assessment of the efficacy of fractional dosing in vaccination against monkeypox as a means of addressing the discrepancy in estimated doses of vaccination that are required; and is she will make a statement.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

In August 2022, following the emergency use approval by the United States Food and Drug Administration, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Joint Committee

on Vaccination and Immunisation endorsed the use of a fractional dose of the vaccines used for monkeypox given by intradermal injection during periods of supply constraints.

Under the approach, eligible people are offered a 0.1 millilitre (ml) dose of the vaccines, instead of the 0.5ml dose typically administered. This will potentially enable up to a five-fold increase in the number of people that can be offered vaccination. NHS England and the UKHSA are currently assessing the operational feasibility of using fractional dosing, including necessary staffing model, vaccination throughput, volume and patient experience.

## ■ Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

**Bim Afolami:**

[45998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the future sustainability of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

**Will Quince:**

An independent clinical review of services at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre was conducted in 2019. A programme board, including local partners, NHS England and local integrated care systems, has been developing, reviewing and testing options for a sustainable future service. Further actions will be confirmed in due course.

## ■ Neurology: Health Services

**Alberto Costa:**

[45534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the clinical guidance on the (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of functional neurologic disorders.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent organisation responsible for developing evidence-based guidance for the health and care system. NICE has produced clinical guidance to support clinicians in the diagnosis of functional neurological disorder (FND). The 'Suspected neurological conditions: recognition and referral' guideline, published in 2019, addresses the initial assessment of symptoms and signs which might indicate a neurological condition, including FND. The guideline is available at the following link:

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng127](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng127)

NICE is also developing a guideline on rehabilitation for chronic neurological disorders, which will include FND. NICE expects to publish the final guideline in December 2023.

**■ NHS Digital and NHS England**

**Alex Norris:** [\[48480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the merger of NHS England and NHS Digital on the current workforce of both bodies.

**Alex Norris:** [\[48481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment the Department has made of the potential impact on contractors of the merger of NHS England merger and NHS Digital.

**Robert Jenrick:**

NHS England, NHS Digital and Health Education England will be merged from 1 April 2023. The merger will be managed through statutory transfer orders which will be developed as part of the secondary legislation for all staff employed by NHS Digital and Health Education England transferring to NHS England. A programme to oversee the merger has been established. The organisational design work currently underway will determine the impact on the current workforce and also the future workforce needs of the new organisation. We expect that by the end of 2023/24 the new NHS England will be at least 30% and up to 40% smaller than the current combined size of NHS England, Health Education England and NHS Digital.

**■ NHS Trusts: Overseas Students**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[47361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that international students can afford travel to placements in NHS Trusts.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[47363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding options has he considered for international students who require financial assistance to travel to placements in NHS Trusts.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Eligible international students can receive Travel and Dual Accommodation Expenses (TDAE) through the NHS Learning Support Fund and the NHS Bursary. The eligibility criteria for TDAE provided via both the Learning Support Fund and NHS Bursary mirrors the guidance in the Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. International students undertaking an undergraduate medical degree, within the Office for Student intake target, are eligible to receive travel and accommodation support through the education and training tariff.

While the Government is not currently considering increasing existing funding options for international students that undertake placements in National Health Service trusts, we continue to keep funding under review.



## ■ NHS: Database

**Clive Lewis:**

[\[49205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will introduce provisions to ensure that meaningful and informed consent is sought from each patient before any of their health or social care data is transferred onto the Federated Data Platform.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Data on the Federated Data Platform (FDP) will be transferred from existing data sets, which have a lawful basis for collection and processing. Therefore, seeking the consent of individuals for the transfer of these datasets will not be required. NHS England is committed to transparency on the way data is used within the FDP to ensure that patients are informed of the choice to opt out, where applicable and how to do so. It is also committed to publishing information on who is accessing data and for what purpose.

Data protection law and the common law duty of confidentiality will continue to apply. There must always be a valid lawful basis for the collection and processing of personal information, with transparency about the use of data within federated data platforms, as defined under the applicable legislation. The FDP will be used as separate instances to provide access to data for both the primary use of data, such as direct patient care and the secondary use of data, such as its use in analysis and planning. This will be based on specific use cases which set out the data specification and data classification and access controls which will be used. Where confidential patient information is being used to support direct care within the FDP, explicit consent would not be required as this data has implied consent for use.

## ■ NHS: Hertfordshire

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase the number of NHS staff in Hertfordshire.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The 2020 NHS People Plan focuses on improving the retention of National Health Service staff through a programme to support return to practice, invest in and diversify the training pipeline and ethically recruit internationally. There are currently over 9,600 more nurses and almost 4,100 additional doctors working in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups since last year. We are on schedule to meet the commitment to recruit an additional 50,000 nurses.

Local National Health Service trusts are responsible for managing own staffing levels and for recruiting the appropriate number of health professionals required to meet local service need. In the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff has increased by 1,065 or 23.1% since May 2010. This is due to an increase of approximately 200 staff at the Trust following changes in the hosting of pathology laboratory services in the East of England in July 2017. In the

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, the number of FTE staff has increased by 1,410 or 42.9% since May 2010.

### ■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Licensing

**Mark Logan:** [\[47697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the new licensing scheme for practitioners who operate in England for non-surgical cosmetic procedures will be announced.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Officials are currently exploring how a future licensing scheme for non-surgical cosmetic procedures in England might be implemented, and a potential timetable for its introduction. The scope and details of any future licensing scheme would be set out in secondary legislation and subject to stakeholder engagement and public consultation.

### ■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

**Justin Madders:** [\[45873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish a response to the consultation entitled Aligning the upper age for NHS prescription charge exemptions with the State Pension age.

**Robert Jenrick:**

No decisions on the proposals have yet been made. We will respond to the consultation and announce our next steps in due course.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[47716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to provide free prescriptions to people who have received an organ transplant.

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[48526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending prescription charge exemptions to patients requiring lifelong medication following an organ transplant.

**Robert Jenrick:**

There are no current plans to review or extend the National Health Service prescription charge medical exemptions to include people who have received an organ transplant. For those ineligible for an exemption on medical grounds, arrangements are in place to assist with the affordability of prescriptions, including exemptions for which people with a long-term medical condition may already qualify. Approximately 89% of NHS prescription items are dispensed in the community free of charge.

## ■ Silicosis

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she plans to include silicosis as a notifiable disease under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 provide public health protection in England and place a statutory duty to notify the appropriate authority of certain infectious diseases and causative agents, such as COVID-19. This enables prompt investigation, risk assessment and response by specified bodies to cases of infectious disease or contamination that pose a significant risk to human health. Silicosis is not an infectious disease or causative agent which presents or could present significant harm to human health. Therefore, it cannot be included under Schedule 1 or 2 of the regulations, as the powers are limited in accordance with the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984. Instead, it is associated with occupational exposure to respirable crystalline silica. The Health and Safety Executive recommend health surveillance should be considered for workers involved in high-risk occupations, such as construction and foundry work.

## ■ Social Services: Religion

**James Cartlidge:**

[\[45968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to acknowledge and take account of the religious beliefs of people who are (a) entering the social care system and (b) lack mental capacity as a result of the progression of a neurodegenerative disease.

**Neil O'Brien:**

People who lack mental capacity to make specific decisions about their lives, including those with neurodegenerative diseases, are protected by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). If a best interests decision needs to be made under the MCA, the decision-maker should consider all relevant circumstances including, as far as reasonably ascertainable, the person's beliefs and values, which may include their religious views. Local authorities are also required under the Care Act 2014 to take account of individual's religious beliefs when assessing their needs for care and support and planning their care and support with them.

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[49607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2022 to Question 40760 on Refugees: Afghanistan, how many of the 11,400

Expressions of Interests from individuals seeking resettlement to the UK under Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme meet the eligibility criteria; how many of the 1500 places available in the first year under Pathway 3 have been allocated; how many of those places are for (a) individual applicants and (b) applicants' dependents; if she will make it her policy to (i) bring forward the Government's 20,000 resettlement commitment over five years under the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme to one year and (ii) increase the UK's current resettlement commitment; and if she will make a statement.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The UK has taken a significant and leading role in the international response to supporting at-risk Afghan citizens. Under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) the Government will welcome up to 20,000 people from Afghanistan and the region resettled to the UK over the coming years.

Under ACRS pathway 3 we will offer resettlement places to up to 1,500 people from the three identified cohorts. This includes the principal applicant and their eligible family members. The number of places for each of the three cohorts under ACRS pathway 3 in the first year will be kept under review.

The FCDO received over 11,000 expressions of interest - for Pathway 3 - though many of the expressions of interest received are from individuals who do not meet the eligibility criteria for year one of the pathway.

Those who are eligible and are referred for resettlement under ACRS Pathway 3 will be informed by email from the FCDO with advice on the next steps. We have now begun to inform individuals of the outcome of their expression of interest and we will continue to communicate the outcomes to individuals throughout autumn 2022, as each expression of interest has been considered on a case-by-case basis.

It would not be appropriate to provide numbers until we have communicated the outcome of expressions of interest to all the individuals concerned.

We must bear in mind that the capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and therefore difficult decisions about who will be prioritised for resettlement have to be made.

■ **Animal Experiments: Licensing**

**Feryal Clark:**

**[49799]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2021, how many project licences have been granted to conduct experiments on animals under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The use of animals in science supports the development of new medicines and the safety of our environment, for the benefit of humans and animals, and is only permitted when there are no alternatives.

The Home Office regulator has granted project licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as follows.

- In 2018, a total of 540 project licences were granted.
- In 2019, a total of 481 project licences were granted.
- In 2020, a total of 471 project licences were granted.
- In 2021, a total of 493 project licences were granted.

## ■ Anti-social Behaviour

**Janet Daby:**

[\[45690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that police forces have adequate funding to tackle anti-social behaviour.

**Jeremy Quin:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2022]:* It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives respectively, to decide how best to respond to local priorities and to help ensure the police have the resources they need; we have given them the biggest funding increase in a decade and are enabling policing to recruit 20,000 additional officers over the next three years.

The Metropolitan Police Service funding will be up to £3.24bn in 2022/23, an increase of up to £169.3m when compared to 2021/22. As at 30 June 2022, the Metropolitan Police Service has recruited 2,952 additional Police Uplift Programme officers against a total three-year allocation of 4,557 officers.

Provision of CCTV is a local matter, but the Safer Streets Fund (SSF) includes the delivery of situational crime prevention measures, such as improved street lighting and increased CCTV coverage, as possible funded interventions to prevent anti-social behaviour (ASB), neighbourhood crime and violence against women and girls. There is strong evidence to show simple solutions like increased CCTV can help to prevent crimes before they happen, relieving the strain on police and empowering communities and individuals to feel safer when they are out in public.

On 25 July the Government announced a further £50 million funding for 111 projects through Round Four of the SSF; 83 of these projects have a primary focus on tackling ASB, using a wide range of interventions including: outreach and diversionary activities; educational programmes; behavioural change campaigns; as well as additional CCTV cameras and improved streetlighting.

## ■ Anti-social Behaviour: Parks

**Janet Daby:**

[\[45694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing the use of CCTV cameras in parks on anti-social behaviour.

**Jeremy Quin:**

*[Holding answer 20 September 2022]:* It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives respectively, to decide how best to respond to local priorities and to help ensure the police have the resources they need; we have given them the biggest funding increase in a decade and are enabling policing to recruit 20,000 additional officers over the next three years.

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**■ Asylum and Visas: Applications****Catherine West:****[49227]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to (a) recruit more staff, (b) increase the responsiveness to MPs written and helpline enquiries and (c) put in place other resources to mitigate delays in processing visa and asylum applications.

**Tom Pursglove:**

(a) Staffing levels in the MP Account Management team have increased by 20% over the last 6 months and recruitment is continuing, with additional staff joining over the coming weeks.

(b) A recovery plan is in place which will lead to incremental improvements in service standards over the coming 5 months with a return to 20 day service standard by March 2023.

(c) The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine Visa Schemes applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Staff from other government departments, including DWP and HMRC, have been surged into the department to help with Ukraine work and enable normal visa routes to return to normal service levels in due course.

To help reduce the number of outstanding claims for protection we are investing in a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives that will speed up and simplify our processes, reduce the time people spend in the asylum system and decrease the number of people who are awaiting an interview or decision.

We have extensive ongoing recruitment plans in place and are actively increasing the number of asylum decision makers. Additionally we have career progression options that will aid the retention of staff.

## ■ Asylum: Applications

**Alex Sobel:**

**[49759]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to tackle long processing times for applications for asylum.

**Tom Pursglove:**

To help reduce the amount of time it takes to process asylum applications we are investing in a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives that will speed up and simplify our processes, reduce the time people spend in the asylum system and decrease the number of people who are awaiting an interview or decision.

These initiatives include conducting shorter, more focused interviews or omitting interviews where it is appropriate to do so, streamlining decision templates and focusing on improving quality to ensure decisions are right first time. We have introduced specialist Decision Making Units, providing greater ownership and management of cohorts of asylum cases. Additionally, we have extensive ongoing recruitment and training plans in place, including career progression options that will aid the retention of staff.

We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements, such as digital interviewing and moving away from a paper-based system. We are streamlining and digitising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making.

## ■ Asylum: Northern Ireland

**Claire Hanna:**

**[49800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers children have entered into contingency accommodation in Northern Ireland in the last six months.

**Claire Hanna:**

**[49801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many pregnant women who are asylum seekers have entered into contingency accommodation in Northern Ireland in the last six months.



**Claire Hanna:** [\[49802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children who are asylum seekers have left contingency accommodation in Northern Ireland in the last six months.

**Claire Hanna:** [\[49803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many pregnant women who are asylum seekers have left contingency accommodation in Northern Ireland in the last six months.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not publish this data and such information although recorded across various systems on individual cases, it is not held in a readily available, extractable format. Furthermore, to provide data on known pregnancies only given that some expectant mothers may have not yet declared they are with child, would be to give an inaccurate response.

## ■ **British Nationality: Fees and Charges**

**Paul Blomfield:** [\[49114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to reduce the cost of applying for British Citizenship.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review. However, there are no plans to reduce fees for applications for British Citizenship.

Where fee exceptions are extended to citizenship applications, these are in very limited circumstances and have been put in place to remedy historical anomalies in nationality law.

An amendment to the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations was laid on 26 May 2022 that provides a power to waive fees for child registration applications on the basis of affordability and a fee exception for children who are looked after by a local authority.

We remain of the view that citizenship is not required in order to live, study and work in the UK as leave to remain confers these benefits.

## ■ **Domestic Abuse**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[49781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what measures are in place to protect female victims of domestic abuse during a police investigation.

**Mims Davies:**

This Government is committed to protecting all victims of domestic abuse and is working in partnership with police forces across England and Wales to keep victims safe.

The police have measures at their disposal to protect victims of domestic abuse during a police investigation. These include pre-charge bail conditions and protective orders such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO). Following an incident of violence, or the threat of violence, the police can apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) to provide immediate protection to the victim for 48 hours by, for example, prohibiting the person subject to the notice from contacting the victim. The DVPN is then followed by a DVPO in a magistrate's court.

In the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Government committed to launching a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order, to be piloted from next year. These will go even further in protecting victims from all forms of domestic abuse. This will include making a breach of a new order a criminal offence and having no minimum or maximum duration. The Government is currently undergoing extensive work to prepare the new order for piloting from next year.

To strengthen the police response to cases of domestic abuse and help domestic abuse victims and survivors, the Government also committed in the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan up to £3.3 million over three years to support the rollout of the Domestic Abuse Matters training, to forces which have yet to deliver it, or do not have their own specific domestic abuse training. This training developed by the College of Policing in conjunction with SafeLives and with input from Women's Aid, aims to ensure the police know how to best respond to victims of domestic abuse, understanding its impact on victims, and standardises the police response to domestic abuse.

We continue to work closely with the College to encourage the remaining forces to take up the Domestic Abuse Matters programme.

The Home Office is also planning to double funding for survivors of sexual violence and the National Domestic Abuse Helpline by 2024-25, and further increase funding for all the national helplines it supports. Our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan invests £140 million to support victims, including over £47 million in ringfenced funding for victims' services and £27 million is currently ringfenced funding for 700 ISVAs and IDVAs.

**Lee Anderson:**[\[49782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what protections are in place for spouses who are victims of domestic abuse seeking a divorce.

**Mims Davies:**

Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority for this Government and we are committed to protecting all victims of domestic abuse. To gain protection during divorce proceedings, victims can apply for a protection order. A Non-Molestation Order

protects the victim and relevant child from abuse or harassment and an Occupation Order can prevent the person subject to the order from coming near to the family home. In addition, following an incident of violence, or the threat of violence, the police can apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) to provide immediate protection to the victim, which can then be followed by a Domestic Violence Protection Order in a magistrate's court.

The landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduces a wide-ranging definition of domestic abuse, and further protection to the millions of people who experience domestic abuse and strengthens measures to bring perpetrators to justice. The Act introduced the new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice (DAPN) and Domestic Abuse Protection Order (DAPO), which will provide flexible, longer-term protection for victims from all forms of domestic abuse. The Government is currently undergoing extensive work to prepare the new order for piloting from next year.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also extends the controlling and coercive behaviour offence to apply to ex-partners or family members who do not live together to ensure the protection of individuals from harm after separation or divorce.

Accompanying this legislation, in July 2022, the Government published detailed statutory guidance to ensure that domestic abuse is properly understood by public agencies seeking to tackle this abhorrent crime and provide appropriate support to victims.

The guidance outlines the many forms domestic abuse can take, including in a marital setting and the barriers preventing victims from seeking a divorce. It also recognises specific forms of faith related abuse including coercion to enter into a marriage and the withholding of a religious divorce, as a threat to control and intimidate victims which can be present in different forms under different faiths. The guidance makes clear that safeguarding remains the utmost priority and all victims should be encouraged by the agencies and organisations they encounter to take appropriate steps to protect themselves from harm.

The Home Office is also planning to double funding for survivors of sexual violence and the National Domestic Abuse Helpline by 2024-25, and further increase funding for all the national helplines it supports. Our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan invests £140 million to support victims, including over £47 million in ringfenced funding for victims' services and £27 million is currently ringfenced funding for 700 ISVAs and IDVAs.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Alcoholic Drinks

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[49715]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has evidence for a link between alcohol use and domestic violence.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Alcohol is associated with an increase in the likelihood and severity of domestic abuse (see Guedes et al., 2016) However, the current evidence does not prove a

causal relationship between alcohol and domestic abuse with wider evidence indicating a range of risk factors, alongside alcohol use, contributing to domestic abuse.

Crime Survey for England and Wales for the year ending March 2018 found 16.6% of partner abuse victims in the previous year reported that the offender was under the influence of alcohol (ONS. [Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)): Data year ending March 2018.)

Source cited:

Guedes, A., Bott, S., Garcia-Moreno, C., Colombini, M., 2016. Bridging the gaps: a global review of intersections of violence against women and violence against children. *Global Health Action*, 9(1); Capaldi, D. Knoble, N. Shortt, J. Hyon, K., 2012. A systematic review of risk factors for intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*. Volume 2, Issue 3, pp 231-280.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

**Damien Moore:**

**[49763]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support domestic abuse victims during the cost of living crisis.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that all victims of domestic abuse receive the support they need, when they need it. In March 2022, we published the cross-Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan which invests over £230 million into tackling domestic abuse, including over £140 million for supporting victims.

To help to ensure victims do not remain with an abuser for fear of not having a roof over their head, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities introduced a new legal duty within the Act on local authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation, including refuges. This is backed by £125 million of Government funding to ensure that these vital services are available to anyone who needs them, wherever they live.

Ensuring victims and survivors have the funds to move forward with their lives is crucial. That is why in the Domestic Abuse Plan, the Home Office committed to running a further trial of the flexible funding model. The funds will be made available to charities in selected local authorities, and they will have wide-ranging discretion on what these funds can be used to acquire, based on their first-hand understanding of individual's needs.

We also know that economic abuse can often leave victims economically dependent on abusers, creating financial insecurity that makes it harder for them to access safety. The Government is committed to tackling this form of abuse which is why for the first time in history, economic abuse is now recognised in law as part of the statutory definition of domestic abuse, included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the

Act). In the Domestic Abuse Plan, we have committed £200,000 of funding to further support improving the response to economic abuse.

### ■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[49717]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of crime in England in the last year was linked to county lines.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Drugs are a significant driver of crime. As set out in our Drug Strategy approximately half of all acquisitive crime is linked to drugs and we know that almost half of all homicides in England and Wales are drug related.

That is why last year the Government published a ten-year Strategy to combat illicit drugs. This sets out a whole-system approach to cut off the supply of drugs by criminal gangs, give people with a drug addiction a route to a productive and drug-free life, and reduce the recreational use of drugs.

Through our Drug Strategy we are investing £145m over three years to bolster our existing county lines programme. Since it was launched in 2019, police activity delivered through the county lines programmes has closed over 2,400 lines, made over 8,000 arrests and engaged over 9,500 individuals through safeguarding interventions.

### ■ **Fire and Rescue Services: Ukraine**

**Kim Leadbeater:**

**[49303]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will provide funding to facilitate a fourth FireAid convoy to provide firefighting equipment to Ukraine.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Home Office officials are providing non-financial support to National Fire Chief's Council, Fire Aid and the UK's fire industry who are organising and funding a fourth convoy.

The Home Office earlier this year funded and supported three substantial road convoys of fire and rescue vehicles that were donated to Ukraine. Overall, 60 fire and rescue vehicles and over 150,000 items of equipment donated by the UK's fire and rescue services were successfully delivered to the front line.

### ■ **Immigration: Appeals**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[49215]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many successful appeals in the First-tier Tribunal are awaiting implementation as of 7 September 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

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

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

**Joram Nechironga****Damien Moore:**[\[49770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the case of former soldier Joram Nechironga.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We do not routinely comment on individual cases. Under the UK Borders Act 2007, the Home Secretary is required by law to issue a deportation order for any foreign national who has received a custodial sentence in the UK of at least 12 months, unless an exception applies.

All foreign national offenders are provided with the opportunity to raise claims against their deportation. Any representations received are carefully considered on an individual basis and determined before a person is returned.

We only ever return individuals to their country of origin when the Home Office and, where applicable, the Courts, considers they have no legal right to remain in the UK and where it is safe to do so.

**Members: Correspondence****Grahame Morris:**[\[49113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the MP Home Office Engagement Service Team's service standard time is for responding to correspondence from hon. Members.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of Hon. Members' written correspondence within 20 working days.

Performance against target has been impacted by an unprecedented increase in MP's queries following the Afghan evacuation, Ukraine crisis and HMPO application surge.

The Department has launched a recovery plan which will lead to incremental improvements in service standards over the coming 5 months, with a return to the 20 day service standard by March 2023.

**David Linden:** [\[49235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the correspondence of 5 July 2022, sent again by email on 2 August, 16 August, and 30 August 2022, from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL12597.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay in the department responding to the hon. Member. The Home Office responded on 12 September 2022.

**David Linden:** [\[49236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the correspondence of 28 June 2022, sent again by email on 26 July and 30 August 2022, from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL12478.

**David Linden:** [\[49237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the email correspondence of 13 June 2022, sent again by email on 11 July, 25 July, 2 August, and 30 August 2022, from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11715.

**David Linden:** [\[49238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the correspondence of 19 July 2022, sent again by email on 16 August, 23 August, and 30 August 2022, from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11455.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded as detailed below:

**PQ 49236** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0359763/22 – The Home Office responded on 8 September 2022.

**PQ 49237** – MPAM reference: MPAM/0338998/22 – The Home Office responded on 8 September 2022.

**PQ 49238** - MPAM reference: MPAM/0326219/22 – The Home Office responded on 8 September 2022.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[49608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the letter to all MPs from the Home Office MP Engagement team, dated 6 September 2022, if she will make it her policy to employ more staff to clear the backlog of MP enquiries and reinstate separate written responses to each MP enquiry; what assessment she has made of the impact on the ability of MPs to track and follow up on complex cases of her proposal to suspend written responses and replace these with telephone calls; and if she will make a statement.



**Tom Pursglove:**

Staffing levels in the MP Account Management team have increased by 20% over the last 6 months and recruitment is continuing, with additional staff joining over the coming weeks. Performance against target has been impacted by an unprecedented increase in MP's queries following the Afghan evacuation, Ukraine crisis and HMPO application surge.

The department has launched a recovery plan which will lead to incremental improvements in service standards over the coming months with a return to a 20-day service standard.

We will review our future operating model as we go through the recovery period, and Ministers are considering this.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[49739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford may have to wait until February 2023 for responses to enquiries sent to her Department in spring 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Performance against target has been impacted by an unprecedented increase in MP's queries following the Afghan evacuation, Ukraine crisis and HMPO application surge.

The department has launched a recovery plan which will lead to incremental improvements in service standards over the coming five months with a return to a 20-day service standard by March 2023.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[49740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether issuing bulk response emails, including details of a number of different constituents, to enquiries which have exceeded the 20 working day service standard is GDPR compliant.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The bulk response approach is compliant with GDPR guidelines. As is standard practice, MP's offices will be expected to ensure that they only share any information obtained from the department with the relevant constituent to ensure compliance.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[49741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the MP Account Management Team in her Department will be able to accept telephone enquiries for cases which do not relate to urgent passport or Ukraine visa applications.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The MP Account Management Team (MPAM), via the MP Enquiry Line, already accept telephone queries for all cases.

**■ Migrant Workers: Doctors****Damien Moore:** [49774]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps with her Cabinet Colleagues to encourage international medical graduates to work in the UK, in the context of the pressures on the NHS.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office have already delivered a range of measures to support the health and care sector and encourage international medical graduates to work in the UK. The Home Office launched the Health & Care visa in 2020, which makes it easier, cheaper, and quicker for health workers – including international medical graduates – to come and stay in the UK to work compared to other immigration routes.

The Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care will continue to work together to raise awareness of the Health and Care visa and support the use of the Points Based System.

**■ Passports and Visas: Applications****Catherine West:** [49226]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to provide further support following the closure of its Portcullis House hub to respond to enquiries from the offices of hon. Members relating to (a) passport and (b) Ukraine visa applications.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Following the closure of the Portcullis House hub, we have now set up a national programme of engagement events enabling MP's and their caseworkers to meet with Home Office officials nearer to their constituencies.

Urgent enquiries, including passport and Ukraine visa applications should be sent to the Urgent inbox [mpurgentqueries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:mpurgentqueries@homeoffice.gov.uk).

**■ Passports: Fees and Charges****Gavin Robinson:** [49177]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2022 to Question 42040 on Passports: Fees and Charges, when she plans to provide a substantive response to this question.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The data requested is not held in a reportable format and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

**■ Police: Harlow**

**Robert Halfon:** [49611]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers are designated to cover Harlow and the surrounding villages.

**Robert Halfon:** [49612]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to (a) increase policing and (b) reduce crime in Harlow.

**Robert Halfon:** [49613]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of the promised 20000 new police officers committed to by the Government will be deployed in Harlow.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Beating Crime Plan sets out the government's commitment to driving down crime, protecting the public and increasing public confidence in the criminal justice system. This includes the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers through the Police Uplift Programme. We are working with policing partners to deliver this plan. It is for Chief Constables and elected Police and Crime Commissioners to target their resources (including the deployment of additional officers) to tackle local priorities.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of officers recruited as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme on a quarterly basis. The latest data, covering the situation to 30 June 2022, are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-officer-uplift-statistics>. These data are published at Police Force Area level in the supplementary tables accompanying the bulletin.

Essex police has been allocated a total of 449 additional officers for the three year uplift programme. As at 30 June 2022, Essex police has recruited 345 additional officers.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistics). These data are collected by Police Force Area only. Data on the number of police officers in Essex Police, on both a full-time equivalent (FTE) and a headcount basis are available in the Open Data Tables that accompany the release:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1005761/open-data-table-police-workforce-280721.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005761/open-data-table-police-workforce-280721.ods)

The deployment of officers across a police force area is a decision for operationally independent Chief Constables.

**■ Police: Hounslow****Seema Malhotra:** [\[49687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to increase the number of police officers in Hounslow.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[49688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle violent crime in Hounslow.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Government is determined to tackle serious violence by combining tough enforcement action to get dangerous weapons off the streets with programmes that steer young people away from crime.

Between 2019 and the end of the 2022/23 financial year, we will have provided The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime with up to £33.7 million for London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), which brings together local partners to identify and tackle the drivers of serious violence.

The VRU works closely with all 32 boroughs, including Hounslow, to deliver interventions that aim to prevent vulnerable young people from engaging in, or falling victim to, violent crime. The VRU's work in Hounslow includes funding programmes to help vulnerable young people achieve at school, including sports-based mentoring activities, as well as the PEACE detached youth work programme in Hounslow, which delivers outreach support to young people in areas affected by county-lines related activity.

From 2019 to the end of the 2022/23 financial year we are providing the Metropolitan Police Force, who serve Hounslow, with over £50m to deliver targeted enforcement action to tackle serious violence. Our 'Grip' programme uses a highly data-driven process to direct more visible police patrols to streets and neighbourhoods most affected by violence, which has included providing additional patrols in key areas of Hounslow. It also suppresses serious violence by using data to identify the top violence hotspots and target police activity in those areas. This work is complemented by 'problem-solving' policing interventions aimed at tackling the long-term causes of serious violence affecting specific locations.

We are also investing £200 million in the 10-year Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), which identifies what works to divert children and young people away from serious violence. The YEF have invested in three projects in Hounslow: £28,500 into the Horn of Africa Youth Association, which delivers a 'Youth Empowerment Project'; £35,000 into the Hounslow Action for Youth Association, which delivered a 'Young Women's Writing Project'; and a pilot project to train youth workers to deliver Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

The deployment of officers remains an operational decision for Chief Constables. As part of the Government's commitment to recruit 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by March 2023, as at 30 June 2022, the Metropolitan Police Service has

recruited 2,952 additional uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 4,557 officers.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Rachael Maskell:**

[49201]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to enable Afghan refugees to move out of bridging hotels into permanent accommodation; and what her timetable is for achieving that.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[49202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to move non-Afghan refugees out of bridging hotels and into communities.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We are working at pace towards moving people out of bridging hotels into settled accommodation and have moved – or are in the process of moving - over 7,000 people into homes since June 2021.

There is a huge effort underway to support the families into permanent homes as soon as we can so they can settle and rebuild their lives, and to ensure those still temporarily accommodated in hotels are given the best start to their life in the UK.

The length of time that a family will remain in bridging hotels is dependent on a number of factors including the availability of appropriate housing. We strive to allocate the right families into the right accommodation to ensure that their integration into their new communities in the UK is as smooth as possible. To achieve this, we triage and prioritise families to ensure the settled accommodation provides the best possible match, taking into consideration date of arrival into the UK, family size, vulnerability and integration factors.

Where local authorities or employers are able to offer accommodation in greater volume and more quickly, this overall timescale will reduce. We would like to encourage local authorities who have not yet pledged support to consider offering to do so.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have also introduced the Find Your Own Accommodation scheme which empowers Afghan families to source their own accommodation, rather than the Home Office. They will need to secure agreement, from their new local authority, that they will continue to receive ongoing integration support from them, once they have moved into their new home.

Some of the arrivals during Operation Pitting were British Nationals - approximately 4000-5000 British Nationals and their families arrived under OP Pitting.

**■ UK Border Force: Private Education****Emily Thornberry:****[51490]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of dependents of Border Force staff for whom her Department provided financial support for education fees in school years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2014-15 and (c) 2019-20; and how many dependents of Border Force staff will be covered by such support in the 2022-23 school year.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Prior to 2017, Border Force did not hold the required data in an easily accessible format for information relating to costs and the number of dependants of Border Force staff.

No specific budget is set as the costs incurred will vary from year to year. This is dependent on the variance of fees and can also change according to the number of staff that are deployed and the number of their dependants.

All Government guidelines are followed in relation to any deployments of staff overseas.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: Boats****Catherine West:****[51888]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Independent Review of Border Force by Alexander Downer, published in July 2022, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of Border Force in tackling the issue of small boats arriving on UK shores.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government takes seriously the issue of illegal migration, and is particularly determined to stop the dangerous, unnecessary and illegal crossings made in small boats.

Advice will be provided to the Home Secretary upon which she can make a judgment on progressing the recommendations within the Downer review in due course.

**■ Visas: Russia****John Healey:****[49055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK Standard Visitor Visas have been granted to Russian citizens in every month during 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office publishes data on visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of granted applications of Visitor visas to Russian nationals are published in table Vis\_D02 of the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset. 'Standard Visitor' is one of the four types of 'Visitor' visas which

are aggregated within this dataset, which also include visiting for a [Permitted Paid Engagement](#), the [Marriage Visitor visa](#) and visiting the UK in a [Chinese Tour Group](#).

Please note that the published data relate to Russian nationals, regardless of their residency. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending June 2022.

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

## JUSTICE

### ■ Administration of Justice: Autism

**Esther McVey:** [\[49642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people diagnosed with autism who have been through the court system in each of the last five years.

**Esther McVey:** [\[49643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people diagnosed with autism were granted reasonable adjustments as defined within the Equal Treatment Bench Book in the last year.

**Rachel Maclean:**

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) does not require that people going through the court system tell them if they are diagnosed with autism. HMCTS also does not record centrally the number of people with autism who have requested a reasonable adjustment in relation to their autism or otherwise told the agency that they have autism.

HMCTS also does not record centrally when a judicial office holder agrees to a reasonable adjustment as defined in the Equal Treatment Bench Book for people diagnosed with autism.

HMCTS is committed under the National Autism Strategy Implementation Plan to continue to improve staff awareness of dealing with court and tribunal users with hidden disabilities, including autistic people.

Initiatives include the current pilot of the Hidden Disabilities sunflower lanyard scheme to help users with hidden disabilities get the support they need. The pilot has been a success and is now being rolled out nationally with a completion date of June 2023.

HMCTS and the judiciary are committed to providing reasonable adjustments that will help people with disabilities including autism access services, facilities and information, and participate in court and tribunal proceedings without disadvantage.



## ■ Barristers

**Julian Knight:** [\[45324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made impact of the falling number of criminal Barristers in England and Wales on the operation of the criminal justice system.

**Rachel Maclean:**

In his Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid, Sir Christopher Bellamy commented that between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the number of barristers undertaking public criminal work fell by 6% whereas, over the same time period, there was a 26% fall in the number of cases for which payment was claimed under the Advocates' Graduated Fee Scheme (with a corresponding 8% fall in spend). He concluded that 'it is important to bear in mind that with a significant fall in work between 2015/16 and 2019/20, there would bound to be a contraction of the labour force.'

As recommended by Sir Christopher Bellamy, we are increasing criminal barristers' fees by 15 percent. This will see the typical barrister earn around £7,000 more a year.

## ■ Crime Prevention: Females

**Steve Reed:** [\[49165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the press notice entitled Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime, published by his Department on 23 January 2021, how much his Department expects to spend in each of the next five years as a result of this policy.

**Steve Reed:** [\[49166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the press notice entitled Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime, published by his Department on 23 January 2021, when his Department expects this project to be completed.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The press notice entitled "Extra funding for organisations that steer women away from crime" published by the Ministry of Justice in January 2021 announced that 38 organisations would receive almost £2 million funding. In the following financial year (2021/22), a further £2.5 million was distributed to women's community sector organisations, bringing total investment in the sector to £9.5 million since the publication of the Female Offender Strategy in June 2018.

This month, we announced further funding of up to £24 million to support vulnerable women in or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system to tackle the root causes of crime. This significant investment covers the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 and will help women with the support they need. We have not settled funding plans beyond 2024/25.

We are delivering new facilities in the women's prison estate and expect the first prisoners to arrive in the new accommodation in 2025, with programme completion

estimated by the end of 2025. The programme will deliver new open facilities that provide a bridge between custody and return to the community and offer increased opportunities for work, education and resettlement activities, to help reduce reoffending.

The overall cost of the programme is currently commercially sensitive as we look to bring a contractor onboard for the design stage of the contract, expected in November this year.

## ■ Offenders: Employment

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[49614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps her Department takes to help offenders find employment following their release from prison.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Increasing the number of prison leavers who get a steady job or access training after leaving custody is a priority for our department. This is because we know employment reduces the chance of reoffending significantly, by up to nine percentage points. The proportion of prison leavers released from custody employed at six months from their release has risen by almost two thirds to 23% between April 2021 and March 2022, but we will do more.

The Prisons Strategy White Paper includes rolling out dedicated Prison Employment Leads in 92 prisons to match prisoners to jobs. In those same prisons, we are rolling out Employment Hubs, where prisoners can access job opportunities and support writing applications and CVs.

We are also rolling out prison Employment Advisory Boards to link prisons with local industry to help prisoner leavers meet the needs of the local labour market.

Finally, New Futures Network, the prison service's network of employment brokers, works with over 400 employers to find prisoners work in prison, on Release on Temporary Licence and on release.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[49233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the process for handling applications and associated decision-making for early release on compassionate grounds is completed in a (a) timely and (b) effective manner.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Secretary of State may release a serving prisoner at any point in their sentence if they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist which justify the prisoner's release on compassionate grounds. The new Early Release on Compassionate Grounds Policy Framework was published in May 2022 and sets out the criteria and process for making an application for early release on compassionate grounds.

The policy framework sets out the information and reports required and provides guidance for prison staff on the appropriate timing for an application to be made. The guidance emphasises the importance of prisons having in place efficient processes to identify qualifying cases and avoiding unnecessary delays.

The policy is published online and communications issued to prisons to ensure staff are aware of the framework.

### ■ Prisoners: Older People

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[49234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he expects the Older Offenders Strategy to be completed and published.

**Rachel Maclean:**

New ministers will need to consider when we publish the ageing population strategy, and we will engage with stakeholders as part of this process.

### ■ Prisons: Labour Turnover

**Steve Reed:** [\[49164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve the retention of prison staff.

**Rachel Maclean:**

In late 2021, the Ministry of Justice launched a retention tool kit to help Governors to tackle the main drivers of attrition in their prisons. We are using the data from this and enhanced exit interviews to better understand why employees are leaving.

We made a significant investment in pay for prison staff through the 2022/23 pay award. This delivered an increase in base pay of at least 4% for all staff between bands 2 to 11, alongside further targeted pay rises for our lowest paid staff of up to £3,000, which we hope will help in reducing leaving rates.

Since April 2022, we have invested in several new initiatives to improve the experience of our new joiners and increase retention of our employees. These include a new peer-to-peer learning scheme, the introduction of mentors for new prison officers, a supervision pilot in two prisons, and new leadership training in prisons facing retention challenges.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Buildings: Insulation

**Catherine West:** [\[49746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to include landlords who own more than one property in his Department's plans to finance cladding removal.

**Paul Scully:**

Landlords who own more than one property in buildings eligible for the Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund (PSCRF) or the Building Safety Fund (BSF) can benefit from funding to make building safe. Further details on the funding scheme for buildings between 11 metres and 18 metres will be announced in due course.

**Business Rates****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[49264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what proportion of the businesses rates bill is paid by (a) retailers and (b) non retailers.

**Paul Scully:**

The department does not collect data on business rates bills by sector. Business rates bills are however determined by the rateable value of a property. Published Valuation Office Agency statistics set out that, as of 31 March 2022, retail properties in England accounted for over £16 billion in rateable value out of a total rateable value for all properties in England of over £64 billion. Further information is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/valuation-office-agency-non-domestic-rating-statistics>. The Government has, for 2022-23, provided significant support for retailers in England through a 50% business rates relief for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties, worth up to £110,000 per business. This relief is worth an estimated £1.7 billion.

**Care Homes: Energy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2022 to Question 45908 on Care Homes: Energy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding provided to local authorities to support residential and nursing homes with the rise in energy costs.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is introducing a new six-month scheme for businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including charities and public sector organisations) which will offer equivalent support as is being provided for consumers. This will protect them from soaring energy costs. Further details will be published shortly.

More broadly, DLUHC and DHSC are working closely with councils, as we always do, to understand what the impact of inflationary increases will be on service delivery and budgets.

**Charter Cities****Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[45743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether it is his Department's policy to create charter cities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The department has no plans to create charter cities at this time.

■ **Construction: Planning****Fleur Anderson:**[\[49283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has plans to amend planning regulations on the impact of building (a) works and (b) noise on local neighbourhoods.

**Lee Rowley:**

Local planning authorities have broad powers to impose conditions on grants of planning permission as they see fit to enhance the quality of the built environment and mitigate the adverse effects of a development, providing they are necessary, proportionate and relevant to planning and the development. This can include to help reduce impacts associated with noise, environmental pollution and other disturbances that arise during the construction process. Local planning authorities have a range of planning enforcement powers to take action against non-compliance with conditions.

■ **Construction: Standards****Jim Shannon:**[\[49662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the independent review of the construction products testing regime will be (a) completed and (b) published.

**Lee Rowley:**

The department commissioned an Independent Review of the system for testing construction products. The review looks to examine how to strengthen the current system for testing construction products to provide confidence that these materials are safe and perform as marketed. This is a complex area and good progress has been made. We expect to publish the review shortly, and will respond in due course.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people (a) York and (b) in England have yet to claim the £150 relief for energy bills through the Council Tax scheme due to them not paying by direct debit.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government publishes monthly monitoring data on the delivery of the council tax rebate, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-tax-rebate-monitoring-data-april-june-2022>. The Department does not routinely collect information on the method by which council tax is paid by people who are yet to receive a rebate payment. However, the total estimated numbers of eligible households in (a) York and (b) England that had not received a rebate payment by 31 July 2022 were (a) 10,000 and (b) 2.6 million.

## ■ Fuel Poverty

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to create warm hubs in local communities where people can access a warmth, a warm meal and the ability to socialise to avoid isolation.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government recognises that households and communities face rising living prices. That is why we have taken decisive action by supporting people with their energy bills. Over the next 2 years our energy price freeze will save the average household at least £1,000 a year on current prices from October and is in addition to the £400 energy discount for all households. Community hubs, delivered by local government, charities and places of worship are vital to delivering public services and supporting their local communities. This is why there will also be an equivalent package of support for non-domestic energy users such as charities and public sector organisations for a period of 6 months. Decisions on what services are delivered in community hubs are rightly taken at a local level allowing service providers flexibility to respond to local circumstance and need.

## ■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[48509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with mortgage lenders that refuse to lend on properties in blocks without an External Wall Survey assessment; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2022]:* The Building Safety Act confirmed that those at fault, not blameless leaseholders, will be the ones who pay to fix unsafe cladding. This has further removed risk for lenders and will help restore common sense to the market. Following this the largest mortgage lenders confirmed in July 2022 that, subject to their normal policy requirements, they will lend on any property that is part of a developer or government remediation scheme or properties that are protected by the new statutory protections, as evidenced by a qualifying lease certificate. This statement can be found [here](#).

The Government is advancing work with the industry to quickly operationalise these changes and are driving engagement with lenders and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to achieve this.

## ■ Holiday Accommodation: Licensing

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he will take steps to enable local authorities to license short term holiday lets.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will introduce a registration scheme for (a) second homes and (b) short term holiday lets.

**Lee Rowley:**

To better understand the issues faced by both communities and businesses, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport launched a Call for Evidence on the introduction of a Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme in England on 29 June, which will help provide further evidence on the positive and negative impacts of short-term lets and holiday lets. Consultation ended on 21 September.

### ■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Payments

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of doubling the thank you payments to people who accommodate Ukrainian refugees.

**Paul Scully:**

Lead sponsors can receive £350 for up to 12 months of Homes for Ukraine sponsorship and the department continues to monitor and review the support provided under the scheme.

### ■ Housing: Safety

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent progress his Department has made on improving the safety of residential buildings.

**Paul Scully:**

Significant progress has been made on improving the safety of residential buildings in England. Our overriding concern has been to address the immediate safety issues posed by having unsafe cladding on medium and high-rise buildings. We have made £5.1 billion available to address life safety fire risks associated with unsafe cladding in high-rise residential buildings, committed to funding the replacement of unsafe cladding on mid-rise buildings; and agreed with major developers that they will pay for remediation on buildings they were involved with. Currently, 95% of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding have been remediated or have work underway, and £1.4 billion has been allocated from the Building Safety Fund, for non-ACM cladding, estimated to cover over 97,000 homes. This scheme has reopened, and support is being provided to applicants to accelerate their applications and remediation plans.

The Building Safety Act gained Royal Assent on 28 April 2022 and fundamentally reforms the regulatory system, providing greater assurance that buildings are safe. At its core it clarifies accountability for making sure a building is safe, enhances the assurance provided by the regulator, and strengthens the tools that can be utilised to seek redress. It gives powers for two new regulators - the Building Safety Regulator



and the National Regulator for Construction Products who will put in place a stringent new regulatory regime for higher-risk buildings, oversee the performance of public and private building control bodies, and oversee the safety and standards of all buildings and construction products.

A programme of work to strengthen guidance for the industry and competence of professionals is ongoing, including multiple improvements to the Building Regulations and statutory guidance. The use of combustible materials in external walls of new blocks of flats above 18 metres in height is banned and restrictions on their use in new medium-rise residential buildings have been set; guidance to ensure sprinklers are provided as standard on any new residential development above 11 metres has been updated; and consultation on our intention to require multiple staircases on residential buildings above a certain height will start shortly. Better assessments of risk have been enabled by funding and supporting a new standard, PAS 9980, to properly assess risks in buildings proportionately so residents are safe and building owners do not require unnecessary works.

#### ■ **Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[45965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of legislating to extend provisions of the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022 to cover ground rent on existing residential leases.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[46186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Answer by the Leader of the House to the Question from the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston, 30 June 2022, Official Report, column 460, what plans his Department has to bring forward further legislative proposals on ground rent.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[49253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to bring forward further legislative proposals on leasehold reform to help protect existing leaseholders.

**Lee Rowley:**

We are due to bring forward further Leasehold reforms later in this parliament.

#### ■ **Levelling Up Fund**

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[49276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many eligible local authorities did not accept capacity funding to support a Levelling Up Fund bid.

**Dehenna Davison:**

To support the development of high-quality bids to the Levelling Up Fund, a one-off payment of £125k in capacity funding was allocated to all category 1 local authorities in England, and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales.

Payment of this capacity funding was made to all the eligible local authorities. In total, 158 payments were made in Round 1 of the Fund and a further 15 for Round 2. No local authority rejected this payment.

**Matt Vickers:**[\[49288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the projects funded through the Levelling Up Fund on local communities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Applications to the Levelling Up Fund are subject to the robust assessment process set out in published guidance. This includes reviewing the alignment of each bid with the Levelling Up Fund objectives and local plans for levelling up. We also assess the value for money and deliverability of every bid.

Additionally, all successful Levelling Up Fund bids are subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation requirements to review the impact of projects in local communities.

Details of the approach are set out in our published monitoring and evaluation strategy.

**Dave Doogan:**[\[49305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) capacity and (b) access to capital funding on the ability of local authorities, including in economically disadvantaged areas, to manage infrastructure projects awarded through the Levelling Up Fund.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The competitive Levelling Up Fund (LUF) assessment takes account of how secure the overall funding package is for a LUF bid and the local capacity in place to manage delivery. To support applicants, develop strong bids all category 1 local authorities in England (as measured by the Index of Priority Places) and all local authorities across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland received £125,000 of capacity funding.

The department also closely monitors the delivery of successful projects. We do this through reporting which provides us with an understanding of any delivery or capacity issues that we may need to support places with.

**Local Government Finance****Dave Doogan:**[\[49275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will take steps to provide additional financial support to local authorities that

experience financial hardship as a result of projects (a) running over budget, (b) continuing beyond 2025 and (c) not realising expected returns.

**Paul Scully:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement makes available £54.1 billion in 2022/23 for local government in England, an increase of up to £3.7 billion on 2021/22.

Local authorities are responsible for their own financial management and for maintaining a balanced budget. The Government continues to engage with councils, and we stand ready to speak to any council that has concerns about its ability to balance its budgets. Funding for local authorities in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland is a devolved matter, and one for their respective governments to decide on.

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to promote financial stability in local authorities.

**Paul Scully:**

The Local Government Finance Settlement makes available £54.1 billion in 2022/23 for local government in England, an increase of up to £3.7 billion on 2021/22.

Local authorities are responsible for their own financial management and for maintaining a balanced budget. The Government continues to engage with councils, and we stand ready to speak to any council that has concerns about its ability to balance its budgets.

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will provide guidance to local councils on the risks of pursuing financial schemes which could put public funds at risk.

**Paul Scully:**

Government expects local authorities to act as prudent stewards of taxpayers' money. Local authorities have a duty to comply with the Prudential Framework and have regard to statutory guidance and accounting codes when making investment decisions. This includes statutory guidance on local government investments, issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The department is planning to update the guidance as part of its wider approach to addressing risk across the local government capital system, as announced on 12 May 2022.

## ■ Local Plans: Green Belt

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that any development which requires land to be taken out of greenbelt proposed in local plans (a) is necessary to meet local housing need and (b) has the support of local communities.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the relevant authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. Local plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities.

**■ Planning Permission: Public Consultation****Matt Vickers:**[\[49292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to give residents greater input on local developments.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government has brought forward a Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which currently contains proposals to allow communities to understand proposals more easily through making planning more digital and through simplifying the plan-making process. The Bill also currently contains a placeholder clause for 'street votes' to give residents a direct way to make their views known on certain proposals. The Bill will continue to be considered by Parliament in the coming months ahead.

**■ Private Rented Housing: Rents****Afzal Khan:**[\[45408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of capping the total amount of rent which can be increased annually by private landlords.

**Lee Rowley:**

The White Paper "*A Fairer Private Rented Sector*", published in June 2022, provides further information on the most recent Government announcements in this policy area.

**■ Public Sector: Energy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to help ensure that all public services run by (a) local authority or (b) contracted by a local authority will have sufficient funding to meet their energy costs in winter 2022.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is introducing a new six-month scheme for businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including charities and public sector organisations) which will offer equivalent support as is being provided for consumers. This will protect them from soaring energy costs. Further details will be published shortly.

More broadly, the department is working closely with councils, as we always do, to understand what the impact of inflationary increases will be on service delivery and budgets.

## ■ Recreation Spaces

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support the provision and maintenance of parks and urban green spaces.

**Dehenna Davison:**

On 1st August, DLUHC launched the Levelling Up Parks Fund. This Fund will create or significantly refurbish 100 parks across the UK in urban areas where provision of access to green spaces is lowest.

DLUHC has also made significant funds available to local areas under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which can be used to regenerate urban green spaces, where doing so meets local priorities.

The Local Government Finance Settlement also made £54.1 billion for 2022/23 available to local government in England. Local councils have the powers to determine spending on a range of public services, including maintenance of parks and urban green spaces, and are best placed to decide how to meet pressures in their local areas.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) local authorities and (b) metro mayors in levelling up their communities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Government is committed to working with local leaders to level up the country and reduce geographic disparities across the whole of the UK. The success of mayors such as Ben Houchen has shown how strong and dynamic local leadership can tailor policy to local priorities, attract investment and seize economic opportunities.

That is why the Government has set itself a mission that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal, with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution, with a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

Significant progress is already being made, with a Mayoral devolution deal signed with York and North Yorkshire on 1st August 2022 and the first Mayoral combined county authority deal signed with the East Midlands on 30th August 2022. The Government continues to work with places to agree further devolution deals.

The Government is also providing £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025 through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). In addition, the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund is investing in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing culture and heritage. The Government welcomes the wide range of bids received for the second round of the Levelling Up Fund; these are currently being assessed and an announcement is expected on successful bids later this year.

## ■ Rented Housing: Students

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[45027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the renters reform bill is suitable for the student housing market.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government is aware of concerns regarding student accommodation. The July 2019 “*A New Deal for Renting*” consultation included a question on student accommodation. 19,697 consultation responses in total were received from a range of individuals and, since then, the Government has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement. We will announce next steps in due course.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[45211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make provision for students in the private rented sector to continue to rent on a fixed-term basis that covers their academic year, as part of the proposed renters reform bill.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We expect most students will continue to move in-line with the academic year. However, the proposed reforms will support student households who have children or local roots to remain in their properties after studying if they wish to. It will also mean that students are not locked into contracts when their circumstances change or if property standards are poor.

## ■ Retail Trade: Energy

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[47589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the effect of the rising energy costs on levels of high street recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

**Dehenna Davison:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2022]:* This Government is committed, through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, to reinvigorate high streets and town centres. We have been working closely with high street businesses to understand the impact of the cost of living crisis and to develop plans to help them and their customers.

The recently announced Energy Bill Relief Scheme ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-plans-to-help-cut-energy-bills-for-businesses> ) ensures that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period. A review of the scheme, to be published in three months, will identify the most vulnerable non-domestic customers and how the government will continue assisting them with energy costs after the initial six months.

This is in addition to the unprecedented package of support the Government provided to businesses over the past few years, including recent fuel duty and VAT cuts, business rates holidays, government backed loans worth around £400 billion and the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, which includes support for 101 Town Deals and 72 Future High Streets Fund projects. We will continue to stand firmly behind them and help our high street businesses succeed now and in the future.

## ■ Retail Trade: Urban Areas

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[49194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy on the future viability of high streets.

**Dehenna Davison:**

In the Build Back Better High Streets strategy we set out Government's long-term plan to support the evolution of high streets into thriving places to work, visit and live.

Following on from this, on Wednesday 11 May we introduced the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill, (LURB). This new legislation will play an important role in reviving our high streets by introducing High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs). HSRAs will empower places to tackle decline by bringing vacant units back into use and will seek to increase cooperation between landlords and local authorities, and to make town centre tenancies more accessible and affordable for tenants, including SMEs, local businesses and community groups.

Similarly, local authorities will be given new tools and powers to support compulsory purchase orders and build-out to aid regeneration and delivery, which will result in better outcomes for high streets and towns centres. Other measures such as changes to the advertising regime, pavement licensing rules and permitted construction hours will also support businesses to grow, helping overall economic output.

These new measures build on the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy and will help create attractive and lively high streets, with increased footfall and activity, which attracts people and businesses, increases pride in place and avoids the long-term presence of vacancies, ensuring high streets remain viable now and in the future.



## ■ Sleeping Rough

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help rough sleepers into long-term accommodation.

**Paul Scully:**

On 3 September 2022 the Government published a bold new strategy to end rough sleeping, backed by £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping

The strategy sets out a range of policies and programmes to help people off the streets and to sustain their accommodation, including the £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme, which will provide up to 2,400 longer-term homes for adults facing multiple disadvantage, as well as young people who are already experiencing rough sleeping or are at risk. The strategy also confirms commitment to the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme, backed by £433 million, to provide 6,000 longer-term, move-on homes with accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping, or who have a history of sleeping rough, by the end of this Parliament.

## ■ Towns Fund: Southport

**Damien Moore:**

[\[49765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the Town Deal for Southport.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Throughout the development of the Southport Town Deal my officials have worked closely with Southport and followed robust processes to ensure proposals are ambitious and well-considered, and that projects can ultimately be delivered. This includes:

- Full assessment of all Town Investment Plans considering the overall strategy for the town, the individual projects proposed and local stakeholder engagement. In-principle commitment of funding was only provided once Southport had passed this assessment and confirmed their final list of projects.
- Full business case development for each project. Funding is not paid out to places until they have developed those business cases and submitted summary documentation for review. This includes information about the value for money of a project, expected outputs and outcomes, and its deliverability.
- For particularly large or novel projects like Southport's Marine Lake Events Centre, Towns are required to submit a copy of the full business case for additional scrutiny by the relevant policy experts across government.
- Annual performance review and a separate assurance process which determine annual payments.

## ■ Travellers: Caravan Sites

**Christopher Pincher:**

[\[45116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support local authorities to tackle unauthorised encampments established by travellers.

**Lee Rowley:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2022]:* Local authorities and the police have a wide range of powers that enable them to work in partnership and take action against unauthorised encampments. Additional police powers to tackle trespassers who set up camp illegally on other people's land or in local communities came into force on 28 June 2022.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[49806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the procedure is for provision of funding for current ESF supported projects in Northern Ireland where they are identified as the most appropriate delivery route and in line with the Shared Prosperity Fund's objectives.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will support the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the Levelling Up objectives. In Northern Ireland the Fund will be delivered by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), working closely with Northern Ireland partners through a Partnership Group to design a Northern Ireland Investment Plan.

DLUHC will pursue a varied approach to market in Northern Ireland. This could involve delivery at NI-scale, sub-regionally or locally, as well as commissioning or project competitions. The approach will be guided by the UKSPF Investment Plan for Northern Ireland. Further information on commissioning and project competitions will be published in due course.

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[49807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timescale is for the commencement of the People and Skills strand of the Shared Prosperity Fund in Northern Ireland.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will support the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering on each of the Levelling Up objectives. Northern Ireland's allocation between 2022-23 and 2024-25 is £105 million of core UKSPF funding and £22 million for Multiply, the UK's adult numeracy programme.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will pursue a varied approach to market in Northern Ireland. This could involve delivery at NI-scale, sub-regionally or locally, as well as commissioning or project competitions. The approach will be guided by the UKSPF Investment Plan for Northern Ireland. Further information on commissioning and project competitions will be published in due course.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Scotland and Wales**

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of local and devolved government in Scotland and Wales on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Dehenna Davison:**

UK Government engaged with each Devolved Administration on the design of UKSPF at both official and ministerial levels. Our engagement with ministers from Devolved Administrations in the weeks leading up to UKSPF publication has helped to inform the most appropriate mix of interventions and local allocations for each nation.

■ **Urban Areas: Disability**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to ensure that urban centres are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Government is committed to creating vibrant, mixed use high streets which are open and accessible to everybody. We have prioritised measures that help give councils and communities the flexibility and support they need to create inclusive and thriving places through the ambitious Planning White Paper, the full package of investment in towns and high streets, and the Levelling Up White Paper.

Successful projects from round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund, the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund have included accessibility improvements for high streets across the UK. DLUHC is also making up to £30 million available to local authorities in England to boost the number of Changing Places toilets in existing buildings over the next three financial years.

■ **Urban Areas: Regeneration**

**Matt Vickers:**

[\[49285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support the regeneration of towns and high streets.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Regenerating our high streets and town centres is essential to this Government's commitment to level up the country. Now, more than ever, it is vital that we continue to help our local economies by supporting town centres and high streets to innovate, evolve and thrive.

We are taking concrete steps towards reviving our high streets and town centres by committing billions of pounds to support economic growth and regeneration for high streets, through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund. This is in addition to the £3.6 billion Towns Fund, which includes support for 101 Town Deals and 72 Future High Streets Fund projects, as well as the £220 million UK-wide Community Renewal Fund. Along with funding for capital projects, these also included significant revenue funding to provide resources to local authorities developing plans and projects.

Funding is only one way in which we are supporting local authorities. Beyond this, we are providing support to local leadership with the High Streets Task Force, which delivers hands-on support to local areas most in need, to develop data-driven innovative strategies and to connect local areas to relevant experts.

The Government has also introduced reforms to use classes to enable more flexible use of existing buildings. The use class reform creates a new 'commercial, business and service' use class which encompasses a wide range of uses which will attract people to high streets and town centres.

Furthermore, on Wednesday 11 May we introduced the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill. This new legislation will play an important role in reviving our high streets by introducing High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs). HSRAs will empower places to tackle decline by bringing vacant units back into use and will seek to increase cooperation between landlords and local authorities, and to make town centre tenancies more accessible and affordable for tenants, including SMEs, local businesses and community groups.

This will help create attractive and lively high streets, with increased footfall and activity which attracts people and businesses, increases pride in place and avoids the long-term presence of vacancies, ensuring high streets remain viable now and in the future.

**TRANSPORT****■ British Airways: Standards****Jim Shannon:**[\[49664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with British Airways on reducing the number of disrupted flights from the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

It is the responsibility of British Airways to manage demand, recruit staff and have appropriate contingency plans in place for their services.

The aviation industry has worked hard to build back resilience and ensure flying programmes can be delivered. Over the summer, flight cancellations fell and continue to be in line with 2019 levels.

Reflecting on lessons learnt from the summer, the industry is working to ensure plans are reviewed ahead of the winter months.

## ■ Bus Services: Standards

**Damien Moore:** [\[49772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the requirements of the Bus Services Act 2017 are met in good time.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Bus Services Act 2017 does not contain any time constraints on the introduction of Enhanced Partnerships (EPs) or franchising. However, since publication of the National Bus Strategy, all local authorities in England are pursuing either an EP or developing a franchising business case.

We know that the provision of audible and visible information onboard local services can support a range of passengers to travel confidently. The 2021 National Bus Strategy included a commitment to use powers in the Bus Services Act 2017 to make Accessible Information Regulations, subject to final analysis, and we continue to work towards this goal.

We have now delivered the core components of the Bus Open Data digital service, data standards and the majority of the bus industry is compliant with the regulations. The current focus is working with non-compliant bus operators to support publication, enabling app developers and technologists to use the service.

## ■ Department for Transport: East of England

**Peter Aldous:** [\[49122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the effect on her policies of trends in the level of population growth in the East of England; and if she will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:**

According to the most recent Census estimates, population in the East of England stood at 6.3 million in 2021. This represents growth of 8.3% since 2011 - the highest in England and Wales. The Department recognises both the challenges and opportunities this poses to transport in the region.

We have already invested billions in upgrading the region's existing transport infrastructure, from £1.4 billion on new trains across the East Anglia franchise, to £3 billion on road schemes, including £1.5bn to upgrade 21 miles of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon, and £73.3m for the Lake Lothing Third Crossing ("Gull Wing") in Lowestoft which is currently under construction and due to complete by the end of 2023

We continue to build on this track record, with £95m awarded to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and £39m for Norwich from the Transforming Cities Fund, investing in schemes which aim to transform and improve connectivity within these cities respective transport systems. Five projects in the region have also benefitted from £87m of investment from round one of the Levelling Up Fund.

In addition, both Norfolk and Suffolk have been invited to enter discussions regarding devolution deals.

## ■ Driving Licences: Spain

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[49084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will make an assessment of the number of UK expats in Spain who are no longer able to drive legally in that country with a UK license and who were not able to swap to a Spanish license prior to the deadline of the 1 January 2021; and if she will have discussions with his Spanish counterpart on that matter.

**Kevin Foster:**

We assess the majority of UK licence holders in Spain registered their intent to exchange, as they were advised to, before 31 December 2020. They are therefore unaffected.

UK licences holders resident in Spain and currently unable to drive primarily fall in three groups:

- UK licence holders who are long-term residents in Spain and did not exchange or register their intent to exchange, as advised, before the end of the transition period (31 December 2020).
- UK licence holders who did register their intent to exchange before the end of the transition period, but did not complete the exchange process by 30 April 2022
- UK licence holders who have arrived as residents in Spain after 31 December 2020 and have been residents in Spain for longer than 6 months.

Negotiations with the Spanish Government are ongoing.

## ■ Driving Licences: Ukraine

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[49052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department has received recent representations on the validity of Ukrainian driving licences in the UK for Ukrainian refugees.

**Kevin Foster:**

Enquiries have been received about the use and exchange of Ukrainian driving licences in the GB.

Holders of a Ukrainian driving licence can drive small vehicles (cars up to 3,500kg and motorcycles) for 12 months from the date they become resident in GB. To continue driving after this time, they must obtain a GB licence.

Ukrainian driving licences for cars can also be exchanged for the GB equivalent without the need to take a test. However, drivers who took a test in Ukraine before 28 December 2021 will only be granted entitlement to drive automatic cars when the GB licence is issued. This is because the Ukrainian driver licensing authority does not have information to confirm whether a test was taken in a manual or automatic vehicle before this date.

Officials are currently progressing the work needed to introduce an exchange agreement which would allow holders of a Ukrainian licence to drive larger vehicles to exchange it for a GB equivalent. This is subject to a public consultation and the necessary parliamentary process.

Finally, driver licensing is devolved in Northern Ireland so the relevant regulations would need to be followed by those Ukrainian Refugees resident there.

## ■ Electric Scooters

**Christopher Pincher:**

**[47515]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of its E-scooter trials as of 5 September 2022; and if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that (a) the police and (b) local authorities can enforce and encourage responsible E-scooter use.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Department for Transport has in place a national monitoring and evaluation programme for the e-scooter trials. This programme is drawing from a range of data, including surveys with rental e-scooter users and residents. The findings report from this evaluation is due to be published later this year.

It is our intention to use the powers in the Transport Bill to legalise e-scooter use in the future, with robust technical requirements and clear expectations on users. A more appropriate regulatory regime for e-scooters will allow the police to enforce regulations more effectively and focus on those using e-scooters in a way that endangers themselves and other road users or pedestrians. The Bill will also include provisions that will subsequently permit local authorities to manage cycle and e-scooter rental schemes, so that they can tailor services to their local area while still ensuring a baseline national standard of service provision.

No decisions have been made on the details of the regulations for e-scooters or rental cycle and e-scooter schemes, and we will consult before any new arrangements come into force.



## ■ Great British Railways: Location

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[49256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will announce the full result of the public vote for the National Headquarters Competition for Great British Railways.

**Kevin Foster:**

The full result of the public vote will be published on the Great British Railways Transition Team website later this year, following the Secretary of State's announcement of the successful location.

## ■ Highway Code: Publicity

**Martyn Day:**

[\[49735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a television advertising campaign to help to raise awareness of the changes to the Highway Code which came into effect on 29th January 2022.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The changes to The Highway Code to help improve road safety for people walking, cycling and horse riding have been communicated in two phases:

- A factual awareness raising campaign in February and March, alerting road users to the changes as they came into effect.
- A broader behaviour change campaign in July and August, to align with seasonal increases in active travel, to help embed the changes and encourage understanding and uptake of the new guidance.

Both phases of the campaign were supported by a significant media spend, using channels such as radio, digital audio, video on demand and social media advertising.

Specialist media planners and buyers are commissioned to secure the optimum and most cost-effective media placement for our messaging. The campaign plan used contextual opportunities, raising awareness at the point of the behaviour, as well as priming opportunities to diffuse tensions and build empathy and understanding amongst road user groups. Channels were selected that were able to build high levels of reach and frequency amongst the target audiences to deliver both message take-out and planned behaviour change.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[49082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it remains her Department's policy to introduce a Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate by 2024 as set out in the Net Zero Strategy.

**Lucy Frazer:**

A zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate will increase the UK's supply of ZEVs, create thousands of new jobs and put our industry at the forefront of this global transition. It will help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, encourage new investments in

infrastructure and improve consumer choice. A technical consultation on its design closed on 10 June and we are now analysing consultation responses. We will bring forward the Government's response in due course.

### ■ Railways: Fares

**Justin Tomlinson:**

[\[49129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of charging a flat cost per mile for rail tickets, in the context of the cost of rail travel per mile between Swindon and London.

**Kevin Foster:**

Distance is just one factor governing a particular rail fare; other factors taken into account include journey time, frequency of service and the historic volume of demand, amongst others.

There are a wide range of fares available to meet different passenger needs, including advance fares. Where advance fares are available, including on journeys between Swindon and London, they will be cheaper than flexible fares such as off-peak tickets.

### ■ Railways: Tickets

**Richard Foord:**

[\[49304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she plans to take steps to reduce the cost of rail tickets.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government is taking decisive action to reduce the impact inflation will have on rail fares during the cost of living crisis and, in August, we guaranteed we will not be increasing fares as much as the July RPI figure. We are also delaying any change to March 2023, temporarily freezing fares for passengers to travel at a lower price for the entirety of January and February.

Earlier this year we launched the Great British Rail Sale, the first ever nationwide rail sale. Over 1.3 million tickets were sold, offering around £7million worth of savings for passengers.

There are also several railcards available to passengers, which offer discounts against most rail fares.

### ■ Thameslink Line: Fares

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[49279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, in the context of rail fares being set by her Department, if she will take steps to ensure that the cost of off-peak single fares for Thameslink rail journeys (a) starting and (b) terminating at St Albans City station aligns with the lower contactless fares administered by Transport for London.

**Kevin Foster:**

Contactless ticketing is convenient for many passengers and provides the best value for journeys between St Albans and London.

As part of our Plan for Rail, we are working with industry to consider how we can provide passengers with a better customer experience of the railway, including improvements to rail fares, ticketing and retailing.

**TREASURY**■ **Blackmore Bond: Insolvency****Fleur Anderson:**[\[49282\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had the Financial Conduct Authority on the collapse of Blackmore Bond.

**Andrew Griffith:**

HM Treasury works closely with the FCA to maintain a strong and safe financial system. Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with the FCA to discuss a variety of matters.

The FCA does not have power to investigate a firm that is unauthorised and not carrying out regulated activities. Where problems fall outside the FCA's statutory remit, they assist other agencies and regulators wherever they can. As Blackmore Bond was an unregulated firm, the FCA passed the relevant information to the City of London Police.

In November 2019, the FCA temporarily banned the promotion of high-risk 'speculative illiquid securities' to ordinary retail investors. This ban covers the type of mini-bonds sold by Blackmore Bond. This ban was made permanent in January 2021.

In April 2021, the Treasury launched a consultation on proposals for bringing mini-bonds within the scope of regulation. On 1 March 2022 the Treasury set out its intention to include non-transferable securities, including mini-bonds, within the scope of the Prospectus Regime Review. Issuers of mini-bonds would be required to offer their securities via a platform which would ensure appropriate due diligence and disclosure and be regulated by the FCA.

■ **Child Benefit: Inflation****Mike Amesbury:**[\[51945\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the income threshold for High Income Child Benefit Charge in the context of recent trends in inflation.

**Chris Philp:**

The adjusted net income threshold of £50,000 for HICBC only affects a small minority of earners with comparatively high incomes. Given this, the government considers

that the current threshold for HICBC remains the best option but, as with all tax thresholds, this is kept under review.

## ■ Defence: EU Countries

**Damien Moore:** [\[45131\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to increase defence spending in the context of the increased risks to security on the European continent.

**Chris Philp:**

In March 2021 the government published the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. The IR recognised that Russia remained the most acute threat to our security; and that NATO will remain the foundation of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic.

These assessments have certainly been borne out by the current crisis in Ukraine. We funded these threats by awarding MOD the largest sustained spending increase since the end of the Cold War, with a £24bn uplift in cash terms over the Spending Review 2020 period.

However, our number one priority is to keep the nation safe. That is why, as the Prime Minister announced in her speech to the UN on Wednesday, the UK will spend 3% of GDP on defence by 2030, maintaining our position as the leading security actor in Europe.

## ■ Fuels: VAT Zero Rating

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[49632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to hold discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) stakeholders on the potential merits of zero-rating VAT on domestic fuel.

**Richard Fuller:**

The Government has announced a new 'Energy Price Guarantee' to limit the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity. This will save the average household £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October.

In recognition of the fact that families should not have to bear all of the VAT costs they incur to meet their needs, domestic fuels such as gas, electricity, and heating oil are already subject to the reduced rate of VAT at 5 per cent.

## ■ Pensions: Tax Yields

**Neale Hanvey:** [\[49791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total income to the Treasury was from pensions where the pension fund was not exhausted prior to the recipient's death between 2010 and 2021.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained, compiled, and collated at disproportionate cost.

**■ Post Offices: Bank Services****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[52010\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the amount of cash that can be deposited at a post office.

**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[52011\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of whether (a) banks and (b) building societies would be willing to provide (i) training and (ii) equipment to help ensure that post offices are able to undertake over-the-counter banking services.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government recognises that millions of people across the UK continue to use cash as part of their daily lives, particularly those in vulnerable groups, and has introduced legislation to protect access to cash as part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill. The Bill intends to establish the Financial Conduct Authority as the lead regulator for cash access and provide it with appropriate powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of withdrawal and deposit facilities.

The Government welcomes The Post Office Banking Framework between Post Office Limited and the major UK banks which allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

This is a commercial agreement and therefore the Government does not make assessments of the commercial discussions between POL and participating firms. However, the Government expects the UK banking sector to continue to ensure customers have appropriate access to banking services.

Any method for depositing cash must comply with relevant regulations, including Money Laundering Regulations. The value of cash that can be deposited at a Post Office branch is a commercial decision for the parties involved.

**■ Public Sector: Car Allowances****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[49299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to reflect the recent rise in fuel prices in Approved Mileage Allowance Payments for public sector workers.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government sets the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rates to minimise administrative burdens.

AMAPs are intended to create administrative simplicity and certainty by using an average rate, which reflects vehicle running costs including fuel, depreciation, servicing, insurance, and Vehicle Excise Duty. As it is an average, the rate is necessarily more appropriate for some drivers than others.

Employers are not required to use the AMAP rates. Instead, they can agree to reimburse a different amount that better reflects their employees' circumstances. Where payments exceed the relevant AMAP rate, there will be an Income Tax and National Insurance charge on the difference. It is therefore ultimately up to employers, including individual public sector organisations, to determine the rate at which they reimburse their employees.

Like all taxes and allowances, the Government keeps the AMAP rate under review and any changes are considered by the Chancellor.

### ■ Treasury: East of England

**Peter Aldous:**

[\[49121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on his policies of trends in the level of population growth in the East of England; and if he will make a statement.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Treasury along with other Government departments, carefully considers a number of factors, including local populations, in the impact assessments of individual measures, as well as the distribution of many funding programmes.

The Treasury is making significant investments in the East of England. For example, almost £90m in funding from the first round of the Levelling Up Fund went to projects in the East of England, investing in infrastructure to improve everyday life for local residents.

### ■ Zambia: BlackRock

**Damien Moore:**

[\[49771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the approach taken by BlackRock to Zambian debt.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Zambia is one of three countries to have requested a debt treatment under the Common Framework. The Common Framework was agreed in November 2020 by the UK, along with the G20 and Paris Club, to help deliver a long-term, sustainable approach for supporting low-income countries to tackle their debt vulnerabilities.

Private sector participation in the Common Framework is critical. Under the terms of the Common Framework, a debtor country that signs an MoU with participating official creditors will be required to seek from all private creditors a treatment at least as favourable. Accordingly, once Zambia signs an MoU for its case it will need to engage its private creditors to ensure their participation on comparable terms.

The Government routinely engages private sector creditors on international debt issues in a number of fora and will work closely with its international partners to ensure private creditors fully play their part in Zambia's restructuring.

## WALES

### ■ Wales Office: Information Officers

**Deidre Brock:**

[\[51732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how much his Department spent on communications staff in each year between 2010 and 2016.

**David T C Davies:**

The total salary costs (including National Insurance and pension costs) spent on communications staff between 2010-11 to 2015-16 is shown below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SALARY COSTS* (£)
2010-11	201,848
2011-12	262,350
2012-13	326,146
2013-14	183,271
2014-15	350,637
2015-16	330,759

\* The spend on salaries includes staff on maternity leave and those covering their post in their absence.

### ■ Wales Office: Training

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, on how many occasions the provision of mandatory training for his Departmental staff regarding their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 has been cited by his Department as a defence against Section 109 proceedings since the commencement of that Act.

**Sir Robert Buckland:**

There are no recorded instances where the provision of mandatory training of staff regarding their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 have been cited by the Department as a defence against Section 109 proceedings since the commencement of that Act.



**WOMEN AND EQUALITIES****■ Equal Pay**

**Stella Creasy:** [\[49128\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress has been made on producing the report reviewing the success of gender pay gap reporting regulations mandated by The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

**Katherine Fletcher:**

The last decade has seen the national gender pay gap fall by approximately a quarter; with the gender pay gap reporting regulations helping to motivate employers to improve equality in the workplace.

We are required to carry out a review of the regulations after they've been in force for five years; as is the case for many other business regulations. This is being prepared and will be published in due course.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Cost of Living Payments**

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[49155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) households and (b) people eligible to receive the first Cost of Living Payment have not received it as of 7 September 2022.

**Victoria Prentis:**

No such assessment has been made.

Since the 14th July, the government has processed around 8.4m cost of living payments, worth around £2.7 billion, to eligible claimants who are due to receive the £326 support from DWP or HMRC. There will be some cases – such as those who gained entitlement to the DWP or HMRC cost of living payment at a later date – that will be paid later.

Over 7.2m payments have been processed by DWP and over 1.1m payments have been processed by HMRC. Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

**■ Food Poverty**

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[48378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people living in food poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the rising cost of living on the levels of food poverty in those areas; and what steps her Department is taking to alleviate food poverty levels in those areas.

**Victoria Prentis:**

National and regional statistics on the number of food insecure households are published annually in the “Family Resources Survey” publication. Statistics on levels of food insecure households in England and the West Midlands, covering 2020/21, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2020-to-2021>. Data for Coventry and the Coventry North East constituency is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

No such assessments have been made of the effect of the rising cost of living on the levels of food poverty in these areas.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new “Energy Price Guarantee” will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October. This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost of living support announced earlier this year which includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This includes a £650 cost of living payment (paid in 2 lump sums of £326 and £324) which has been designed to target support at more than 8 million low-income households on means-tested benefits. The payment of £326 was paid between the 14 July and the 31 July for most people and the payment of £324 will be made in the Autumn. In addition, 6 million eligible disabled people will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September and pensioner households will receive a one-off payment of £300 through and as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November.

The government is providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of household essentials, on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England this will take the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £421m. Devolved administrations will receive £79 million through the Barnett formula.

The current Household Support Fund runs from 1 April to 30 September, with Coventry City Council allocated £3,224,222.30 for this period. During this period, a total of £49,520,715.25 has been allocated to West Midlands Local Authorities, which takes their total funding under both Household Support Funds to £99,041,430.50. Local Authorities have the discretion to design their own funds, within the parameters of the guidance and the grant determination.

**■ Pension Credit****Rachael Maskell:****[49725]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who are eligible for pension credit but have not yet claimed it in (a) the United Kingdom, (b) York and (c) York Central constituency.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Estimates for the number of people eligible for Pension Credit are only available at the Great Britain level and are available in the “Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up” publication which can be found on the statistics section of gov.uk. The latest publication relates to the financial year 2019 to 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

**■ Pensions: Autism****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[49580]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that autistic people are supported to access their pensions in later life.

**Alex Burghart:**

In order to ensure our services are available to all, including those with varying or complex needs, DWP provides choice in how customers can access our services to claim their State Pension.

State Pension invite letters are issued to prompt a customer to claim State Pension four months before State Pension age. In the unlikely event of not receiving an invite letter there are still four access routes to claim, making sure those with differing or complex needs have options to use the most appropriate route based on their individual requirements. This includes online, telephony and postal channels. Customers, or their trusted helpers, can choose the most appropriate route to support their needs.

Where, during contact with the department, someone is identified as having additional or complex needs, DWP Agents have access to the Advanced Customer Support Team who ensure DWP has the services and tools in place to help our most vulnerable customers identify, access and engage with the support that they need when they have multiple barriers. This includes support to make a claim and to ensure first payments are made on time, signposting, or referrals to external organisations if needed. All channels offer alternative formats when the claim is made which includes braille, British Sign Language, email, a hearing loop, translations, large print and audio.

In addition, the Government provides free and impartial Pension Wise guidance for anyone who is over the age of 50 with a defined contribution pension (DC). Pension Wise helps individuals with the options they have to access their DC workplace and private pensions savings. This guidance is delivered by the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) who are required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and must make reasonable adjustments for people's accessibility needs. Accessibility requests can either be arranged at the point of booking a Pension Wise appointment or, if during the appointment any additional needs are identified, MaPS can adjust the delivery of the appointment to suit requirements.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[49581]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides to autistic people to help them access their pensions in later life.

**Alex Burghart:**

In order to ensure our services are available to all, including those with varying or complex needs, DWP provides choice in how customers can access our services to claim their State Pension.

State Pension invite letters are issued to prompt a customer to claim State Pension four months before State Pension age. In the unlikely event of not receiving an invite letter there are still four access routes to claim, making sure those with differing or complex needs have options to use the most appropriate route based on their individual requirements. This includes online, telephony and postal channels. Customers, or their trusted helpers, can choose the most appropriate route to support their needs.

Where, during contact with the department, someone is identified as having additional or complex needs, DWP Agents have access to the Advanced Customer Support Team who ensure DWP has the services and tools in place to help our most vulnerable customers identify, access and engage with the support that they need when they have multiple barriers. This includes support to make a claim and to ensure first payments are made on time, signposting, or referrals to external organisations if needed. All channels offer alternative formats when the claim is made which includes braille, British Sign Language, email, a hearing loop, translations, large print and audio.

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## ■ **Poverty: Children**

**Colleen Fletcher:**

**[48380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the number of children living in poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and if she will make an assessment of (i) the impact of the rising cost of living on and (ii) the effectiveness of the welfare system at helping to reduce the level of child poverty in those areas.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The latest statistics on the number of children who are in low-income in Coventry North East constituency and Coventry can be found in the annual publication: Children in low income families: local area statistics. Statistics covering up until financial year ending 2021 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2021>

National Statistics on the number of children in low income in West Midlands and England are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. Statistics, covering up until 2019/20, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

Given the impact of the pandemic on the size and quality of sample data additional breakdowns for regions in 2020/21 were not reliable enough to be published as part of the annual statistics.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new “Energy Price Guarantee” will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October. This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost of living support announced earlier this year which includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This includes a £650 cost of living payment (paid in 2 lump sums of £326 and £324) which has been designed to target support at more than 8 million low-income households on means-tested benefits. The payment of £326 was paid between the 14 July and the 31 July for most people and the payment of £324 will be made in the Autumn. In addition, 6 million eligible disabled people will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September and pensioner households will receive a one-off payment of £300 through and as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November.

The government is providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of household essentials, on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England this will take the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £421m. Devolved administrations will receive £79 million through the Barnett formula.

The current Household Support Fund runs from 1 April to 30 September, with Coventry City Council allocated £3,224,222.30 for this period. During this period, a total of £49,520,715.25 has been allocated to West Midlands Local Authorities, which

takes their total funding under both Household Support Funds to £99,041,430.50. Local Authorities have the discretion to design their own funds, within the parameters of the guidance and the grant determination.

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[49684]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the effectiveness of its policies on tackling child poverty in Feltham and Heston constituency.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The latest statistics on the number of children who are in low-income in Feltham and Heston constituency can be found in the annual publication: Children in low income families: local area statistics. Statistics covering up until financial year ending 2021 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2021>

This Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families, and believes work is the best route out of poverty. While we keep all our policies under continuous review, our clear priority with 1.27 million vacancies across the UK is to support parents to move into and to progress in work wherever possible. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of parental employment - particularly where it is full-time – in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children.

The latest available data on in-work poverty shows that in 2019/20, children in households where all adults were in work were around six times less likely to be in absolute poverty (before housing costs) than children in a household where nobody works. In 2020/21, there were 200,000 fewer children in absolute poverty before housing costs than in 2009/10.

To help parents into work, our Plan for Jobs continues to provide broad ranging support for all jobseekers with our Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP), Job Entry Targeted Support and Restart scheme. Through a staged roll-out, which started in April 2022, around 2.1m low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for extended support through our Jobcentres to progress into higher-paid work. This is on top of the support already provided by increasing the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour, giving nearly 1.7 million families an extra £1,000 a year (on average) through our changes to the Universal Credit taper and work allowances; and the Universal Credit childcare offer which allows working parents to claim back up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month (up to a maximum cap).

On top of this, the government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new “Energy Price Guarantee” will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October.

This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost of living support announced earlier this year which includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This also includes an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials, on top of what has already been provided since October 2021, bringing the total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England, the current Household Support Fund is already providing £421m of support for the period 1 April – 30 September 2022, at least a third (£140m) will be spent on families with children. London Borough of Hounslow Council has been allocated £2,042,396.17.

### ■ Social Security Benefits

**Kate Osamor:** [\[49225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any benefit claimants outside of London have been referred to her Department's Risk Review Team.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Referrals are made to the Risk Review Team for customers across the whole country and are not just specific to London.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

**Kate Osamor:** [\[49222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have had their benefits suspended by the Risk Review Team in each month from January 2020 to September 2022.

**Kate Osamor:** [\[49223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have had their benefits reinstated by the Risk Review Team in each month from January 2020 to September 2022.

**Kate Osamor:** [\[49224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in how many cases has the Risk Review Team recommended that a claim is ineligible, in each month from January 2020 to September 2022.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Monthly statistics are not available.

The current total of customer cases determined by the Risk Review Team as still ineligible is 170,417 cases.

Of these cases some will be subject to review if the customer engages and provides evidence to verify their claim, but at this time, based on current information held, the customer is not entitled.

The cumulative total of customer cases reinstated following review is 7,221 cumulative cases.



The cumulative total of customer cases that have ever been suspended is 177,638 cases.

The above figures are based on internal management information and therefore have not been subject to the same degree of scrutiny and quality assurance as an official statistic.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Greater London

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[49221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants have had their benefits suspended by the Risk Review Team in (a) Enfield (b) Edmonton (c) Greater London in each year since the establishment of that team in May 2020.

**Victoria Prentis:**

This data is not available as we do not capture the number of customers by geographical location.

### ■ State Retirement Pensions: Applications

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[49152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time in days was for her Department to process new State Pension claims received by letter in the latest period for which data is available.

**Victoria Prentis:**

DWP holds the average clearance times for State Pension claims as a whole. However, we do not retain separate data for claims received by letter (BR1 claim form). Therefore, this information is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work & Pensions as the Department does not have a business requirement for this information to be retained.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[49153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time in days is for her Department to process new State Pension claims received online.

**Victoria Prentis:**

DWP holds the average clearance times for State Pension claims as a whole. However, we do not retain separate data for claims received online (via the Get Your State Pension portal). Therefore, this information is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work & Pensions as the Department does not have a business requirement for this information to be retained.

### ■ State Retirement Pensions: Terminal Illnesses

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[49204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to permit terminally ill people to access their state pension regardless of their age.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have no plans to allow early access to State Pension.

This Government is committed to providing a financial safety net for those who need it, including when they near or reach retirement. Support is available through the welfare system to those who are unable to work or are on a low income but are not eligible to pensioner benefits because of their age.

Scotland has the powers under the Scotland Act 2016 to make additional discretionary payments should it wish to do so. Whilst pensions remain a reserved matter, the Scotland Act 2016 has given the Scottish Government the ability to use a wide range of new welfare provisions.

**■ Universal Credit****Peter Aldous:**[\[49116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she expects (a) 10,000, (b) 100,000, (c) 250,000, (d) 500,000 and (e) 1,000,000 legacy benefit claimants to have been issued with a migration notice to move to Universal Credit.

**Victoria Prentis:**

In May 2022 we started a multi-location approach across the country with a small number of claimants, being issued with migration notices. We will continue to develop our processes and systems to ensure the transition to Universal Credit works as smoothly as possible before we proceed to scale the migration process. Government is committed to ensuring the final phase of Universal Credit is rolled out safely and is responsibly delivered by the end of 2024.

**Peter Aldous:**[\[49117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, If she will publish the key performance indicators her Department will use to monitor the performance of the Universal Credit Managed Migration programme.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Formal performance monitoring is not appropriate to a discovery phase where the aim is to learn what works best, rather than achieve a specific volume of cases.

**Peter Aldous:**[\[49118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2022, if she will respond to Recommendation 3 of that report.

**Peter Aldous:**[\[49119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2022, if she will respond to Recommendation 4 of that report.

**Peter Aldous:**

[49120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2022, if she will respond to Recommendation 8 of that report.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Following the conclusion of the Social Security Advisory Committee's formal referral on the regulations, the Department published its response on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

## ■ Universal Credit: Cost of Living Payments

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[49154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Universal Credit claimants have been made ineligible for the Cost of Living Payments as a result of deductions or sanctions having reduced their award to zero during the qualifying assessment period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Deductions for advances, third party debts and government debts are not a reason for someone to be ineligible for the Cost of Living Payment.

Between the 14 and 20 July, the department processed over 7.2m cost of living payments worth around £2.4 billion. In total, over eight million families will be eligible for this payment, with around one million eligible because they receive tax credits and no other eligible benefits. These families will receive their first instalment from HMRC in the autumn, and the second instalment in the winter. Further information is available at: 7.2 million Cost of Living payments made to low-income families - GOV.UK ( [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) ) and at: Cost of Living Payment - GOV.UK ( [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) )

Universal Credit households can receive a nil award for various reasons. The majority of nil awards are due to household earnings. Other reasons that can cause or contribute to a nil award include capital, other income, other benefits, sanctions and fraud penalties.

12,200 households containing 12,400 UC claimants had a nil Universal Credit award with an amount deducted for a sanction in the qualifying assessment period, that did not receive the cost-of-living payment. Of these households, there were 6,600 households containing 6,600 claimants where the sanction was the only reason for the nil award. In the remaining households the nil award was due to a combination of the sanction and other reasons.

## ■ Universal Credit: Feltham and Heston

**Seema Malhotra:**

[49685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Feltham and Heston constituency were in receipt of Universal Credit payments whilst in work in each month since August 2021.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Monthly statistics on the number of people who are on Universal Credit and are in employment, by parliamentary constituency, are published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Energy Update

**Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):**

[\[HCWS295\]](#)

#### **Energy Prices Support Package**

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 8 September, yesterday the Government published further details of the support we are offering to people and businesses in the face of soaring energy prices. This package of unprecedented assistance for the whole UK provides the certainty families and business owners need to help them manage their energy bills.

Details of the Energy Price Guarantee for domestic consumers and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme for business and non-domestic properties are available on gov.uk. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out more details of the costs of the Government's support as part of his fiscal statement on 23 September.

We have designed the schemes to be simple for energy consumers. Families and eligible businesses do not have to take action or apply for support, energy suppliers will automatically apply the appropriate reduction via their energy bill. Households will receive an equivalent level of financial support wherever they are in the UK. The same is true for businesses across the UK too.

The Energy Price Guarantee will ensure that a typical household in Great Britain pays an average £2,500 a year for their energy from 1 October 2022 for the next two years. Households in Northern Ireland will see equivalent benefits on the energy bills. On average usage, a household in Great Britain will save £1,000 a year. This is in addition to the already announced £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme for households across the UK. The most vulnerable UK households will also continue to receive £1,200 of support. For consumers in Great Britain who pay for their energy through a monthly, quarterly or other regular bill, the Energy Price Guarantee will be applied when their bill is calculated. The Guarantee limits the amount the bill payer can be charged per unit of gas or electricity, so the exact bill amount will continue to be influenced by how much energy is used.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide protections for all businesses, voluntary sector and public sector organisations in Great Britain which face excessively high energy bills over the winter period, whether they are on existing fixed price contracts agreed on or after 1 April 2022, signing new fixed price contracts, variable or deemed tariffs or flexible purchase contracts. To administer support, the Government has set a Supported Wholesale Price – expected to be £211 per MWh for electricity and £75 per MWh for gas, less than half the wholesale prices anticipated this winter – which is a discounted price per unit of gas and electricity.. Suppliers will pass the reduction in the wholesale price through to their customers.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will run initially for 6 months covering energy use from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023. There will be a review of the operation of the scheme, to be published in three months' time. This review will consider how best to offer further support to customers who are the most vulnerable to energy price increases. These are likely to be those who are least able to adjust, for example by reducing energy usage or increasing energy efficiency.

A similar scheme will be established in Northern Ireland, providing a comparable level of support. We intend to provide more information on the comparable support for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland by the end of September.

The scheme for domestic consumers will be different, because of the different way the electricity and gas market operates in Northern Ireland. But it will provide households with an equivalent level of support as for those in Great Britain. Households do not need to take any action to receive this support although it may take a little longer than for Great Britain for relief to take effect. However, the savings will be applied to energy used from October onwards so that households get the same overall benefit as those in Great Britain. The Energy Price Guarantee limits the amount you can be charged per unit of gas or electricity, so households' exact bill will continue to be influenced by how much energy is used.

Households in Northern Ireland will also receive the £400 discount on their bills through the Northern Ireland Energy Bills Support Scheme, which will offer the same level of support as for households in Great Britain. We aim to provide this £400 discount for Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

A comparable scheme to the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will be in place for businesses and other non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland. This will follow a similar structure to the GB scheme. We intend to provide more information on the comparable support for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland by the end of September.

As the Prime Minister said on 8 September, the Government is bringing forward emergency legislation to underpin the delivery of our support package. We will introduce a Bill immediately after Parliamentary Recess. It will include measures for the GB Energy Price Guarantee for domestic consumers and Energy Bill Relief Scheme for businesses and non-domestic properties so all of GB receives equivalent support; and enable the delivery of comparable schemes in Northern Ireland. It will provide powers to enable low carbon generators to move onto fixed prices to end the situation where electricity prices are set by the marginal price of gas ensuring consumers pay a fair price for their energy.

### **Contingent Liabilities**

I have laid before Parliament a Departmental Minute describing contingent liabilities arising from the Energy Price Guarantee. It is normal practice when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability of £300,000 and above, for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Department concerned to present Parliament with a minute giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances.

I regret that because of the urgency of establishing this scheme before 1st October, I have not been able to follow the usual timelines for issuing notice at least 14 parliamentary sitting days before the liability begins to be incurred.

The Treasury has approved the scheme in principle. I will continue to update Parliament on this scheme.

### **New Oil and Gas Licensing**

We are scaling up renewables, nuclear, and lower carbon energy sources, to boost Britain's energy security in the long term, and reduce our exposure to high fossil fuel prices set by global markets outside our control. While we do this, there will continue to be ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming years during this transition, with oil and gas needed to maintain the security of the UK's energy supply. Making the most of our own domestic resources under the North Sea will make us less dependent on foreign imports.

In light of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and weaponisation of energy, strengthening our energy security is an absolute priority, and – as the Prime Minister said – we are going to ensure the UK is a net energy exporter by 2040. To get there we will need to explore all avenues available to us through solar, wind, oil and gas production - so it's right that we've lifted the pause to realise any potential sources of domestic gas.

In 2021, it was decided that a climate compatibility checkpoint should be put in place, so that compatibility with the UK's climate objectives is assessed as part of the decision on whether or not to endorse continued oil and gas licensing rounds.

In December 2021, a consultation on the design of this checkpoint was launched, running until the end of February 2022. A large number of detailed and thoughtful responses were received. The HM Government response, which is being published today, engages with many of the arguments put forward, and sets out the Government's position on these. HM Government has also designed a checkpoint which takes the responses to the consultation into account; a document setting out this design and the tests to be included in the checkpoint is also being published today.

Having reviewed the results of these tests in the context of a 33<sup>rd</sup> licensing round, it has been decided that a 33<sup>rd</sup> licensing round is compatible with the UK's climate objectives.

The Government understands that the North Sea Transition Authority will shortly be launching a new licensing round for oil and gas exploration. This round could result in the award of more than 100 licences to developers, strengthening the UK's vital offshore oil and gas sector, putting more UK gas on the grid for longer, and bolstering the future energy security of the UK.

### **Shale Gas Extraction**

The current pause (moratorium) on shale gas extraction was put in place on the basis that HM Government would only support shale gas exploration if it could be done in a safe and sustainable way, and that it would be led by the science on whether this was possible. The stated policy aim was to minimise disturbance to those living and working nearby, and to prevent the risk of damage.



Much has changed, however, since 2019.

In April this year, HM Government commissioned the British Geological Survey to advise on the latest scientific evidence around shale gas extraction, to assess progress in the scientific understanding which underpins government policy, and to allow ministers to consider next steps. Having considered their advice carefully, HM Government is publishing this report today.

The report makes clear that forecasting the occurrence of felt seismic events remains a scientific challenge for the geoscience community. It also makes clear that to improve our understanding we need more exploratory sites to gather the necessary data.

Geomechanical modelling has been an important tool in the United States for this purpose, but requires accurate mapping of sub-surface faults, for which more data is required in the UK. There have only been three test wells which have been explored for shale gas in the UK to date.

On the wider geopolitical stage, Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting restrictions on gas supply to Europe have impacted on global energy prices and the energy security of our neighbours and allies. This emphasises the need for 'home grown' sources of energy to reduce our reliance on imports.

The Government remains committed to net zero by 2050, but we have to get there, and to get there we are going to need oil and gas. And domestic sources of gas clearly have a lower climate impact than shipping Liquefied Natural Gas by tankers halfway across the world.

Under these circumstances, HM Government considers it appropriate to pursue all means for increasing UK gas production, including shale gas extraction. The Government is therefore lifting the pause on shale gas extraction and will consider future applications for Hydraulic Fracturing Consent with the domestic and global need for gas, and local support for developments, in mind.

While HM Government will always try to limit disturbance to those living and working near to sites, tolerating a higher degree of risk and disturbance appears to us to be in the national interest given the circumstances described above. With this in mind, it is important that the policy relating to shale gas extraction reflects this. HM government will be reviewing this aspect of shale gas policy as part of a wider reflection on how to better support the industry throughout the whole life cycle of the investment, from initial exploration to large scale production and I will provide an update on this in due course.

We will look to the North Sea Transition Authority and other licensing authorities to be proactive in extending existing consents and permissions where practicable, to support the development of energy resources in the National interest.

It is clear that we need more exploratory sites in order to gather better data and improve the evidence base and we are aware that some developers are keen to assist with this process. We look forward to seeing these proposals in detail.

### **Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment**

HM Government has completed an Offshore Energy Strategic Environmental Assessment (OESEA) of a draft plan/programme to enable further offshore licensing/leasing for offshore marine renewables including wind, wave and tidal energy, oil and gas, gas storage including carbon dioxide storage, and offshore production and transport of hydrogen.

The renewable energy elements of the draft plan/programme cover the relevant parts of the UK Exclusive Economic Zone and the territorial waters of England and Wales; for hydrocarbon gas storage it applies to UK waters (territorial sea and the relevant parts of the UK Exclusive Economic Zone ) and for carbon dioxide storage it applies to UK waters (the UK Exclusive Economic Zone and relevant territorial sea, excluding the territorial sea in Scotland); for hydrocarbon exploration and production it applies to the UK territorial sea and the UK Continental Shelf; and for offshore production and transport of hydrogen it applies to UK waters.

A public consultation on the OESEA4 Environmental Report was undertaken between 17 March 2022 and 27 May 2022. All comments received on the draft plan/programme and the Environmental Report have been considered by HM Government and a HM Government Response for OESEA4 has been prepared and will be placed on the GOV.UK website (as per above link). This summarises stakeholder comments and HM Government's clarifications and responses to them. The Environmental Report and the comments received have informed the HM Government's decision on whether to proceed with the draft plan/programme.

HM Government has decided to adopt the draft plan/programme, with the area offered restricted spatially through the exclusion of certain areas together with a number of mitigation measures to prevent, reduce and offset significant adverse impacts on the environment and other users of the sea. On the basis of the evidence set out in the Environmental Report, which discussed the alternatives to the chosen approach, and the comments received during consultation, HM Government concludes that there are no overriding environmental considerations that would prevent the achievement of our draft plan/programme of offshore marine renewables leasing (wind, wave and tidal technologies), offshore oil and gas licensing, offshore gas storage and carbon dioxide storage leasing/licensing, and offshore production and transport of hydrogen, provided appropriate mitigation measures are implemented along with future research. In all cases, the relevant competent authority should undertake any appropriate assessments(s) prior to awarding licences or leases, where screening in accordance with the relevant conservation of habitats regulations shows this to be necessary.

The plan/programme based on OESEA4 will have a lifespan of approximately four years. HM Government, therefore, commits to refreshing the OESEA in two to three years' time to account for the higher ambitions relating to offshore wind and hydrogen in the BESS that are expected to be delivered in the period 2026-2030 and any additional changes to the energy policy context, technology, and understanding of the environmental baseline and effects assessment.

The associated documents have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

## ■ Retained EU Law

**Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):**

[\[HCWS298\]](#)

On the 31st January, to mark the two-year anniversary of the UK's departure from the European Union, the Government set out its plans to bring forward the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

Retained EU law is a category of domestic law created at the end of the transition period. It consists of EU-derived legislation that was preserved in our domestic legal framework by the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to ensure continuity as we left the EU.

However, retained EU law was never intended to sit on the statute book indefinitely. The time is now right to bring the special status of retained EU law in the UK statute book to an end on 31st December 2023, in order to fully realise the opportunities of Brexit and to support the unique culture of innovation in the UK.

To achieve this, the Bill I have introduced today includes the following provisions;

### **Sunset of Retained EU Law**

The Bill will sunset the majority of retained EU law so that it expires on 31st December 2023. All retained EU law contained in domestic secondary legislation and retained direct EU legislation will expire on this date, unless otherwise preserved. Any retained EU law that remains in force after the sunset date will be assimilated in the domestic statute book, by the removal of the special EU law features previously attached to it. This means that the principle of the supremacy of EU law, general principles of EU law, and directly effective EU rights will also end on 31st December 2023. There will no longer be a place for EU law concepts in our statute book.

Before that date, Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations will determine which retained EU law can be reformed to benefit the UK, which can expire, and which needs to be preserved and incorporated into domestic law in modified form. They will also decide if retained EU law needs to be codified as it is preserved, in order to preserve specific policy effects which are beneficial to keep.

The Bill includes an extension mechanism for the sunset of specified pieces of retained EU law until 2026. Should it be required, this will allow departments additional time where necessary to implement more complex reforms to specific pieces of retained EU law, including any necessary legislation.

### **Ending of Supremacy of retained EU law in UK law by 2023**

Currently, retained direct EU legislation still takes priority over domestic UK legislation passed prior to the end of the Transition Period when they are incompatible. This is not in keeping with our status as an independent, sovereign trading nation, and the Government's 2019 commitment to remove this.

Therefore, the Bill will reverse this order of priority, to reinstate domestic law as the highest form of law on the UK statute book. Where it is necessary to preserve the current

hierarchy between domestic and EU legislation in specific circumstances, the Bill provides a power to amend the new order of priority to retain specific legislative effects.

### **Assimilated law**

Following the removal of the special features of EU law from retained EU law on 31st December 2023, any retained EU law that is preserved will become “assimilated law” to reflect that EU interpretive features no longer apply to it.

### **Facilitating Departures from Retained EU Case Law**

To ensure that EU law concepts do not become ‘baked in’ through over cautious court judgments, the Bill will also provide domestic courts with greater discretion to depart from the body of retained case law. It will also provide new court procedures for UK and Devolved Law Officers to refer or intervene in cases involving retained EU case law.

### **Modification of Retained EU Legislation**

To correct an anomaly created by European Union Withdrawal Act which gave some retained direct EU legislation legislative parity with Acts of Parliament for some purposes, despite it not having been properly scrutinised, the Bill will downgrade the status of retained direct EU law for the purposes of amendment. The Bill will modify powers in other statutes, to facilitate their use to amend retained direct EU law in the same way they can be used on domestic secondary legislation. This will enable the amendment of retained direct EU law, with the appropriate level of Parliamentary scrutiny.

### **Powers relating to Retained EU Law**

The Bill will also create powers to make secondary legislation so that retained EU law or assimilated law can be amended, repealed and replaced more easily. This Bill will allow Government via Parliament to clarify, consolidate and restate legislation to preserve its current effect. Using these powers, the Government via Parliament will ensure that only regulation that is fit for purpose, and suited for the UK will remain on the statute book.

### **Business Impact Target**

Having left the EU, the UK has further opportunities to reform its regulatory regime. The UK Government published its consultation response to the ‘Reforming the Better Regulation Framework’ and is in the process of implementing the wider reforms outlined.

As part of these reforms, the Bill repeals the Business Impact Target, which is outdated and not fit for purpose. Any subsequent replacement of the Business Impact Target, when combined with the other wider reforms, will ensure that the UK’s regulatory framework is fit for the UK economy, business and households, into the future.

## ■ **UK’s Updated 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution**

**Minister of State (Minister for Climate) (Graham Stuart):**

[\[HCWS296\]](#)

The Glasgow Climate Pact, agreed by almost 200 countries at COP26 in November 2021, recognised the need for accelerated action to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures. It called for all countries to “*revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as necessary to align with the*

*Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2022, taking into account different national circumstances”.*

During its COP Presidency, the UK has been working with partner countries, non-state actors and civil society to encourage countries, particularly major emitters, to respond to this call. And the UK has shown leadership by revisiting its own NDC to ensure it remains a fair and ambitious contribution to global action on climate change. The latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published earlier this year highlighted the closing window for action to keep 1.5°C in reach and made clear the urgency of delivering on the Glasgow Climate Pact.

In revisiting the UK NDC, the Government considered a range of factors including the latest available science, expectations in the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact, the UK's existing 2050 net zero commitment, and energy security, as well as advice and evidence from the Climate Change Committee and other independent commentators.

The UK has strengthened its NDC by making the following updates to the accompanying information to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding (ICTU), in line with international best practice and the Paris Agreement rulebook

- i) clarified how the target – which remains a commitment to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030 on 1990 levels - aligns with the Paris Agreement temperature goal;
- ii) explained more fully how the UK will deliver the NDC by 2030;
- iii) updated on the progress made in expanding the territorial scope of the NDC to include the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories; and
- iv) included more detail on levelling up, gender, green skills, public engagement, Just Transition and how the UK is supporting other countries with delivery of their NDCs.

The UK's NDC requires the fastest rate of reduction in greenhouse gases between 1990 and 2030 of any major economy and is on a trajectory to net zero by 2050. The Government is committed to net zero by 2050 and looks forward to the review led by Chris Skidmore to ensure that it is delivered in a way that is pro-business and pro-growth.

Since submitting the NDC in December 2020, the UK has published a range of sectoral strategies and plans and has signed up to numerous pledges and actions to deliver on the 2030 target. The Prime Minister has also announced an ambitious package of measures to tackle soaring energy prices and ensure the UK's energy security, following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The UK will submit its updated NDC to the UNFCCC in time for the deadline for inputs to the NDC synthesis report (23 September 2022) and will lay a copy in the House at the same time.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Further Education Funding and Accountability System Consultation Update

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills, Further and Higher Education (Andrea Jenkyns):** [\[HCWS299\]](#)

Following an initial consultation in July 2021, the Government published a second consultation into implementing a new further education (FE) funding and accountability system in July 2022.

This consultation sets out further detail on our reforms to deliver a fairer FE system across the country that effectively supports learners to develop the skills they need to secure high value jobs and support growth of the economy and seeks views on how these can best be implemented. We believe our reforms will enable providers to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their learners, employers, and the wider area, putting taxpayer investment to the best effect.

The consultation was due to close for responses on the 21st September 2022. After listening to the feedback of the sector over the summer, with some stakeholders asking to extend the length of the consultation period, I am announcing that we have extended the consultation's closing date by three weeks. This means the consultation will now remain open for responses until the 12th October 2022.

We will consider the feedback we receive through our consultation and publish a response in due course.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):** [\[HCWS300\]](#)

The Government is today introducing the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill, as committed to in the Queen's Speech at the start of this Parliamentary session. Building on the recently enacted Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022, the measures in this new, significant Bill enable us to bear down further on kleptocrats, criminals and terrorists who abuse our open economy, strengthening the UK's reputation as a place where legitimate business can thrive while driving dirty money out of the UK.

The UK is at the forefront of global efforts to tackle illicit finance and economic crime. There have already been a number of important strides forward in the effort to confront and address economic crime in recent years, including:

- being the first G20 country to establish a public register of domestic company beneficial ownership in 2016 (the People with Significant Control Register);
- the introduction of new powers in the Criminal Finances Act 2017 to include Unexplained Wealth Orders and Account Freezing Orders;



- allocating £400m through the Spending Review and new Economic Crime Levy to support law enforcement over the next three years, as well as a £63m Spending Review settlement over the next three years for implementation of Companies House's transformation programme;
- the publication of the Economic Crime Plan in 2019 and the progress made against it by both the public and private sector;
- establishing the National Economic Crime Centre to co-ordinate the law enforcement response to economic crime and the Combatting Kleptocracy Cell in the National Crime Agency to focus on targeting corrupt elites and their assets in the UK; and
- most recently, passing the expedited Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act.

The Economic Crime landscape is constantly evolving, and we cannot be complacent about the threat. That is why we are bringing forward this further legislation to help tackle these problems and transform our fight against illicit finance.

The key elements of the Bill include:

- Broadening the Registrar's powers so that the Registrar becomes a more active gatekeeper over company creation and custodian of more reliable data, including new powers to check, remove or decline information submitted to, or already on, the companies register.
- Introducing identity verification requirements for all new and existing registered company directors, People with Significant Control, and those delivering documents to the Registrar.
- Providing Companies House with more effective investigation and enforcement powers and introducing better cross-checking of data with other public and private sector bodies.
- Tackling the abuse of limited partnerships (including Scottish limited partnerships) by strengthening transparency requirements and enabling them to be deregistered.
- Creating powers to more quickly and easily seize and recover cryptoassets.
- Creating new exemptions from the principal money laundering offences to reduce unnecessary reporting by businesses carrying out transactions on behalf of their customers.
- Enabling businesses in certain sectors to share information more effectively to prevent and detect economic crime.
- Providing new intelligence gathering powers for law enforcement.

These new measures will tackle economic crime, including fraud and money-laundering, by delivering greater protections for consumers and businesses, boosting the UK's defences, and allowing legitimate businesses to thrive. They will also protect our national security, by making it harder for kleptocrats, criminals and terrorists to engage in money



laundering, corruption, terrorism-financing, illegal arms movements and ransomware payments. And they will support enterprise by enabling Companies House to deliver a better service for over four million UK companies, maintaining our swift and low-cost routes for company creation and improving the provision of data to inform business transactions and lending decisions across the economy.

This Bill forms a key part of the wider Government approach to ensure that law enforcement and the private sector have the tools needed to help tackle economic crime, sitting alongside the key provisions in the Online Safety Bill which will tackle online fraud, as well as the upcoming Second Economic Crime Plan and Fraud Action Plan.

This Bill has been developed in close partnership with law enforcement agencies, as well as with the financial sector, professional and business groups, and civil society organisations. This reflects the breadth of the measures in the Bill, the nature of the threats posed and the importance of working across sectors to tackle economic crime.

The Government remains committed to tackling economic crime and illicit finance, and to strengthening the business environment across all of the UK. We will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations on these measures and the formal Legislative Consent Motion process.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Planning Update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):**

**[\[HCWS297\]](#)**

This statement confirms that it has been necessary to extend the deadline for a decision on the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Development Consent Order made under the Planning Act due to the National mourning period.

The DCO would authorise works for the improvement to Thickthorn Junction and related works linking the A47 to the A11. The Proposed Development is situated within the administrative boundaries of Norfolk County Council and South Norfolk District Council. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on 20 June 2022 and the current deadline for a decision is 20 September 2022. The deadline is now extended to 14 October 2022.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make her decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The decision to set new deadlines is without prejudice to the decisions on whether to give development consent for the above applications.

**TREASURY**■ **Treasury Update**

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Richard Fuller):** [\[HCWS301\]](#)

Today the Government has introduced the Health and Social Care Levy (Repeal) Bill.

This Bill delivers the Prime Minister's promise to reverse the temporary 1.25 percentage point increase in National Insurance rates from 6 November and will cancel the Levy coming in as a separate tax from April 2023.

In cancelling the tax rise for employees, the self-employed and employers, the Government is acting to support individuals with the cost of living by allowing them to keep more of what they earn, as well as to support businesses to pursue growth, innovate and invest.

This will be an average tax cut of around £135 for workers this year and around £330 next year. Taking into account the increase to NICs thresholds at the Spring Statement and the Levy reversal, almost 30 million people will be better off by an average of over £500 in 2023-24.

Around 60% of businesses with NICs liabilities will see a reduction in their NICs bill, with 20,000 of these businesses being taken out of paying NICs entirely due to the combination of this measure and the Employment Allowance. The average savings for businesses will be £9,600 for the 2023-24 tax year.

The Government is implementing the change as soon as possible, to maximise the cash benefit for people and businesses this year. Most employees will receive a cut to their National Insurance directly via payroll in their November pay.

The self-employed will pay NICs at 9.73% on earnings between £11,909 and £50,270 per annum. The blended figure is equivalent to 7 months at the higher rate 10.25% and the remainder at 9%

While the tax rise will be cancelled, funding for health and social care services will be maintained as planned. The additional funding used to replace the expected revenue from the Levy will come from general taxation. The Government remains committed to ensuring fiscal discipline over the medium-term.