



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 September 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:28 P.M., 23 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

#### ■ Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[51485\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) has spent on the (a) investigation into ENRC and (b) defending the proceedings brought against the SFO by ENRC.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

As stated in the response to the Hon. Member's previous question [45309] the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO) investigation into ENRC is ongoing. The ENRC have brought two civil actions for alleged misfeasance against the SFO. This matter remains ongoing and as such the final costs are not yet determined.

The SFO does not disclose the costs associated with its cases as this risks prejudicing the administration of justice and is against the public interest. Information on how the SFO uses resources is published in aggregate in its [Annual Report and Accounts](#).

#### ■ Unaoil

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[51483\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Serious Fraud Office has spent on (a) the (i) investigation and (ii) prosecution of former Unaoil employees and (b) (I) defending and (II) paying appellants' costs in the appeals of those cases.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) does not disclose the costs of its cases as this risks prejudicing the administration of justice and is against the public interest.

the SFO legal costs settled with defendants to date amount to £2.15m. The figure was published in the SFO's recent [Annual Report and Accounts](#). Other settlements have yet to be confirmed.

**Andy Slaughter:** [\[51484\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) spent on the (a) Employment Tribunal Mr T Martin v Serious Fraud Office and (b) SFO's subsequent appeal of that tribunal decision.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The Employment Tribunal case in question initially concluded in February 2021. The cost to the SFO at that time was approximately £83,000.

The associated Employment Appeal Tribunal concluded in July 2022. The proceedings have been remitted to the Employment Tribunal, a date is yet to be confirmed, and costs will be finalised once this has concluded.

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****■ Biofuels****Kenny MacAskill:****[51988]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what energy support costs have been offered to users of biomass.

**Graham Stuart:**

The use of biomass in the electricity sector is already supported by the Contracts for Difference Scheme, the Renewables Obligation Scheme and Feed in Tariff Scheme.

In the heat sector, the Government has recently consulted on a proposal temporarily to suspend the wood pellet quality requirements for the Renewable Heat Incentive to help increase the availability of pellets.

**■ Bulb Energy: Insolvency****Dr Alan Whitehead:****[51405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to make a decision on the future ownership of Bulb Energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Administrators are actively considering all exit options in relation to Bulb to discharge their statutory duties and objectives as quickly and efficiently as is reasonably practicable. Expert merger and acquisition (M&A) advisors have been appointed to lead this process which is ongoing.

**■ Business Premises: Energy****Seema Malhotra:****[51688]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to announce the fixed unit price of (a) gas and (b) electricity for business premises from 1 October 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers was announced on 21 September. To administer support, the Government has set a Supported Wholesale Price, which is a discounted price per unit of gas and electricity. The level of price reduction for each business will vary depending on their contract type and circumstances. The supported wholesale prices for gas and electricity under the scheme will be confirmed on 30 September. Full details of the scheme can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>.

**■ Business Premises: Insulation****Seema Malhotra:** [\[51691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding his Department made available to help support businesses with the insulation of their premises in each financial year since April 2019; and what funding his Department plans to provide for this purpose in each month to April 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not have a dedicated support fund for the insulation of commercial properties. However, businesses can apply for funding opportunities through local schemes on gov.uk. The Government does not have a record of the support provided on insulation measures through these schemes.

The Climate Change Agreements Scheme offers reduced rates of Climate Change Levy worth £255m a year across 53 industrial sectors, in return for businesses meeting energy and/or carbon reduction targets. Businesses are free to meet those targets through any improvements they decide, including improvements to the insulation of their premises.

The Government is continuing to develop options to deliver additional energy efficiency support to businesses.

**■ Business: Electricity****Marsha De Cordova:** [\[49260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle rising electricity prices for business in (a) Battersea and (b) the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has 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. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and more details will follow shortly.

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.

**■ Business: Energy****Julian Sturdy:** [\[48323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with energy suppliers on supporting businesses effected by rising energy costs.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ministers and Officials in the Department regularly engage with energy suppliers to discuss the impact of rising energy costs on businesses of all sizes.



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. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and more details will follow shortly. 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.

**Damien Moore:**

[\[49769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional steps his Department will take to assist businesses struggling with the cost of gas and electricity.

**Graham Stuart:**

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. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and more details will follow shortly. 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.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[51473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish details on the operation of the six month energy price freeze for businesses in Northern Ireland.

**Graham Stuart:**

A non-domestic scheme will be established in Northern Ireland, providing a comparable level of support. The Great Britain scheme announced on 21 September, will need the different market arrangements in place in Northern Ireland. The Government intend to provide more information on the support for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland by the end of September.

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[51474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish details on the operation of the six month energy price freeze for households in Northern Ireland.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 21 September, the Business Secretary confirmed equivalent support for households in Northern Ireland through The Northern Ireland Energy Price Guarantee.

Energy suppliers will reduce the unit prices within household bills by up to 17p/kWh for electricity and 4.2p/kWh for gas, and there is no need for households to take any action to receive this support. This scheme is expected to take effect from November in Northern Ireland, but the Government will ensure households receive the same benefit overall as households in Great Britain by backdating support for October bills through bills from November.

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[51689]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the statement by the Prime Minister of 8 September 2022 on UK Energy Costs, Official Report, column 398, what steps his Department plans to take to review how energy bill support should be targeted to businesses.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers was announced on 21 September and details can be found at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>. The Government will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers (including all UK businesses, those in the voluntary sector like charities, and public sector organisations such as schools and hospitals) whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices. This support will be equivalent to the Energy Price Guarantee put in place for households.

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[51690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funding his Department has made available to freeze the energy bills of businesses after October 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

Further details on the Energy Bill Relief Scheme were announced on 21 September 2022. The scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

There are no cost-free options. The Government must intervene now to guard against worse economic outcomes going forward. This intervention will therefore be funded by the Exchequer.

## ■ Business: Government Assistance

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[49259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to help businesses with (a) reduced demand and (b) increased costs.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

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.

## ■ Business: York

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the findings of a recent study conducted by York High Street Forum Research on an anticipated reduction of footfall on high streets in York, if he will provide financial support in the way of (a) grants or loans and (b) an extension of the payback of covid-19 loans to high street businesses.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

We will continue to support high street businesses as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses can benefit from 50% businesses rates relief worth almost £1.7 billion in 2022-23.
- “Pay as You Grow” options allow Bounce Back Loan borrowers to tailor their repayments to individual circumstances. Businesses have the option to repay their loan over a period of up to ten years, as well as the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months or pause their repayments entirely for up to six months.
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders can extend the repayment period for CBILS facilities where this is needed, to a maximum of 10 years.

Last week the Government announced 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.

## ■ Carbon Emissions

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[51976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken pursuant to the Court ruling in *The Queen (on the application of (1) Friends of the Earth Limited (2) ClientEarth (3) Good Law Project and Joanna Wheatley v Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy [2022] EWHC 1841 (Admin)* on the Government's Net Zero Strategy.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has applied for permission to appeal the judgment. The Government is seeking permission to appeal specific elements of the court's judgment on the section 13 and section 14 duties. Its grounds of appeal have been lodged with the court and set out the legal detail.

**■ Companies House: Reform****Seema Malhotra:** [\[49679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many officials in his Department are working on legislative proposals relating to Companies House reform as of 8 September 2022.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:**

There were 24 BEIS officials working on legislative proposals relating to Companies House reform at that date, with support from legal advisors from the Government Legal Department.

**■ Diseases: Research****Afzal Khan:** [\[49778\]](#)

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.

**■ District Heating****Seema Malhotra:** [\[51673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to bring forward further details of the fund announced by the Prime Minister on the 8 September to support the reduction of energy bills for those on communal heating networks.

**Graham Stuart:**

Those on communal heating networks will primarily benefit through the new [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#) through which the government will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices. This support will be equivalent to the Energy Price Guarantee put in place for households.

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[51862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that people using communal heat networks will be covered by the energy price cap.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government wants heat network consumers to receive equivalent support to mains gas and electricity consumers. Therefore, on 21 September, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme was announced which will see energy prices for non-domestic energy customers such as businesses, charities and public sector organisations cut –

protecting them from rising energy costs. These discounted prices for wholesale gas and electricity will ensure lower prices for customers on communal heat networks.

## ■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme

**Munira Wilson:**

[51995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on what date he expects the energy bills support scheme announced on 8 September 2022 for schools and other public sector organisations will be implemented.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers, including schools and other public sector organisations, was announced on 21 September and details can be found at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>. The scheme will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers. It will apply to energy usage from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, running for an initial six-month period. The savings will be first seen in October bills, which are typically received in November.

**Munira Wilson:**

[51997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 8 September 2022, Official Report, column 398, whether (a) early years providers, (b) schools, (c) colleges and (d) universities will be included in the sectors provided with further support with their energy bills beyond the initial six-month period.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers was announced on 21 September and details can be found at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>. The scheme applies to all non-domestic customers, including education establishment. The Government will publish a review of the scheme in three months, which will consider how best to offer further support to customers who are the most vulnerable to energy price increases, beyond the initial six months of the scheme. Continuing support to those deemed eligible would begin at the end of the initial six month support scheme, without a gap.

**Munira Wilson:**

[51998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the support scheme for energy bills for (a) schools and (b) other public sector organisations will cap the unit price of (i) gas and (ii) electricity.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers, including schools and other public sector organisations, was announced on 21 September and details can be found at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme>

[help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers](#). To administer support, the Government has set a Supported Wholesale Price, which is a discounted price per unit of gas and electricity. The supported wholesale prices are expected to be £211 per MWh for electricity and £75 per MWh for gas, less than half the wholesale prices anticipated this winter, but will be confirmed on 30 September.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[52004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of providing the energy bills support scheme announced on 8 September 2022 to (a) businesses and (b) public sector organisations.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government will set out more details on the costs of the Government's support in Friday's fiscal event.

#### ■ Energy Intensive Industries: Energy

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[49255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the rise in energy costs on energy-intensive industries; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government remains determined to secure a competitive future for our energy intensive industries (EIIs), providing them with extensive support, including over £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs. The British Energy Security Strategy recently announced an extension of the EII 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 more details will follow shortly. 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.

#### ■ Energy Intensive Industries: Finance

**Afzal Khan:** [\[51961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional financial support to (a) bakeries and (b) other businesses which use a large amount of energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government understands the huge pressure businesses are facing with their energy bills, which is why immediate action has been taken to support them over the winter, protecting jobs and livelihoods. Details of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers were announced on 21 September and details can be found

at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>. The Government will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers (including all UK businesses, the voluntary sector and the public sector) whose current gas and electricity prices have been significantly inflated in light of global energy prices.

## ■ Energy: Billing

**Alan Brown:**

[\[51768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 8 September 2022, Official Report, column 398, if he will set out the green levies to be suspended from energy bills; and if he will provide (a) the total value per household bill of suspending those levies and (b) how those levies will be funded.

**Graham Stuart:**

The green levies to be temporarily suspended from household energy bills are the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Feed in Tariff (FiT), Green Gas Levy (GGL), Renewable Obligation (RO), and the Warm Home Discount (WHD). The total value per household of average usage of suspending these levies is equivalent to £150 a year and the funding of these levies will be met by the Government through the Energy Price Guarantee during the temporary suspension.

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[49258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) prepay force-fitting warrants have been requested by energy companies in each month of 2022 as of 7 September and (b) customers moved to prepay for arrears monthly between October 2021 and March 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government does not collect or hold this data.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[45252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support people in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency with the price of (a) heating oil and (b) gas for private homes.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government recognises that heating oil prices have risen steeply over the past year and sympathises with consumers who rely on this fuel for everyday use.

The Government has announced a new energy price guarantee to reduce bills for households on gas and electricity by an average of £1,000 for the typical household.



For households who do not use gas for domestic heating, the Government has committed to provide an additional payment of £100 to compensate for the rising costs of other fuels such as heating oil.

**Alex Norris:** [\[48478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the reasons behind the levels of energy pricing in other European countries compared to those in the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

Differences in prices across countries are influenced by many factors, including differences in fuel mixes, market structures, regulation, and taxation strategies within each country.

For example, some countries have historically passed proportionally more energy system costs onto households than businesses compared to the UK. Other countries benefit from very cheap hydropower.

This means that while all countries have been affected by the rise in global energy prices, the impact on households and businesses will vary between countries.

In light of the unprecedented increase in global energy prices, on September 8th the Government announced a package of measures to support people and businesses with their energy bills.

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[51471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement the energy price freeze announced by the Prime Minister on 8 September 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

To ensure the scheme can work effectively for government, energy suppliers, businesses and other non-domestic organisations, with the minimum disruption to existing processes, emergency legislation is being introduced to underpin the scheme. This will be subject to the standard parliamentary process for emergency legislation.

Emergency legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity when Parliament is back from recess in October. The precise timeline will depend on parliamentary scheduling and is still to be confirmed.

## ■ Fuel Oil and Liquefied Natural Gas: Rural Areas

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[46213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support people who live in rural areas and use (a) heating oil and (b) liquefied natural gas for domestic heating.



**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 September 2022]:* The Government understands fuel prices are an important component of UK household and business expenditures, and understands the negative impact of domestic fuel costs on UK consumers.

The Government has announced a new energy price guarantee to reduce bills for households on gas and electricity by an average of £1,000 for the typical household. For households who do not use gas for domestic heating, the Government has committed to provide an additional payment of £100 to compensate for the rising costs of other fuels such as heating oil. .

**■ Fuels: Prices****Kenny MacAskill:****[51989]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the energy support costs provided for unregulated fuels will be (a) discretionary funding or (b) provided in full.

**Kenny MacAskill:****[51990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will set out the basis of assessment for any discretionary funding being provided by way of energy support costs.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is committed to ensuring all households receive equivalent levels of support for their energy bills.

In June 2022, the Government announced the Energy Bills Support Scheme which will provide £400 to all households, including those using alternative fuels, starting in October 2022.

The Government will also provide an additional payment of £100 to households across the UK who are not able to receive support for their heating costs through the Energy Price Guarantee. This might be because they live in an area of the UK that is not served by the gas grid and is to compensate for the rising costs of alternative fuels, such as heating oil.

**■ General Practitioners: Energy****Stephen McPartland:****[51650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to cap the price of energy for GP surgeries.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme for non-domestic customers was announced on 21 September and details can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bill-relief-scheme-help-for-businesses-and-other-non-domestic-customers>

**■ Hospitality Industry: Electricity****Dr Rupa Huq:****[51863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of availability of electricity contracts for new hospitality businesses.

**Graham Stuart:**

There is no obligation on energy suppliers to offer terms to non-domestic customers. When offering terms, suppliers will likely take account of factors such as: the costs of supplying energy to the customer, the customer's credit history and the circumstances of the sector in which they operate.

On 21 September the government announced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which will provide a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic customers. Further information is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-plans-to-help-cut-energy-bills-for-businesses> .

**■ Hospitality Industry: Energy****Julian Sturdy:****[48316]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of rising energy prices on the hospitality sector.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is monitoring the impact of energy prices on businesses and recognises the scale will vary depending on business type and type of contract or tariff.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Bill Relief Scheme - to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period. After this initial six-month period, the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

The Government is also providing support via with business rates relief, freezing alcohol duty rates on beer, cider, wine and spirits, increasing the employment allowance.

**■ Housing: Insulation****Virginia Crosbie:****[49808]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage consumers to improve the insulation of their properties; and what recent assessment he has made of the potential contribution that reducing the demand for energy can make in helping the UK meet its climate targets.

**Graham Stuart:**

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.

The Government also launched a digital service providing impartial, tailored advice on energy efficiency. This will be supported by the launch of additional support for homeowners through telephone advice and specific local area advice for energy consumers.

**■ Iron and Steel: Energy****Julian Sturdy:**[\[48318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of rising energy prices on steel manufacturers.

**Graham Stuart:**

Through close engagement with the steel industry, the Government is acutely aware of the continued pressure on steel companies because of high energy and raw material costs.

The Government remains determined to secure a competitive future for energy intensive industries (EIIs) such as steel, providing them with extensive support, including over £2 billion to help with the costs of energy and to protect jobs.

The recently-announced Energy Bill Relief Scheme 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.

**■ National Grid: Feltham and Heston****Seema Malhotra:**[\[51669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of capacity issues at the national grid on housebuilding in Feltham and Heston.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is aware of lengthy connection timelines currently being offered in parts of the country, particularly where transmission network upgrades are required to accommodate distribution network connections, such as housing developments. Network companies are working to release capacity and accelerate connection timescales, including through improved modelling of network impacts of new connections and streamlining of connection procedures. The network companies

have committed to engaging with stakeholders and customers, including those in Feltham and Heston, to inform them of proposed approaches to enable timely new network connections.

### ■ Natural Gas: Production

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[48320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government has plans to strengthen the UK's energy security through an increase in domestic gas production.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has been in commercial negotiations with both EDF and the Sizewell C project company since January 2021. These negotiations are ongoing and commercially sensitive.

### ■ Nuclear Power Stations: Construction

**Alan Brown:** [\[51770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the impact assessment BEIS039(F) for the Nuclear Energy (Financing) Act 2022, if he will make a comparative assessment of the equity of utilising a 9 per cent hurdle rate to estimate the cost of a new nuclear power station to be constructed under a Contract for Difference and a maximum 6 per cent hurdle rate for the cost of constructing new nuclear power station under a RAB model.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Impact Assessment (IA) calculated the difference in the cost of building and financing an illustrative large-scale nuclear plant, funded by the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) or Contracts for Difference (CfD) model. Several assumptions were made to reflect uncertainty around project cost and likely hurdle rate for investors.

The RAB enables lower cost of finance, by providing a revenue stream to the developer during construction. The IA shows that RAB results in better value for consumers over the project lifetime and reduces total project costs. Paragraphs 58-61 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3057/publications> explain the different hurdles rates assumed under a CfD compared to RAB.

### ■ Offshore Industry: North Sea

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[51991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's policy is on the decommissioning of North Sea oil and gas installations; and whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that (a) direct and (b) supply chain jobs in this sector are based in the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government requires that decommissioning of offshore oil and gas installations is undertaken in accordance with relevant UK and international regulatory obligations. The policy is underpinned by the principles of achieving a clear seabed, and those who benefited from exploitation or production of hydrocarbons bear responsibility for decommissioning, through decommissioning programme consultation and approval.

As part of the North Sea Transition Deal agreed between the Government and offshore oil and gas sector in 2021, the sector has set a voluntary target of 50% UK content, including capital investment for oil and gas decommissioning projects, and 30% for locally provided technology.

**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[51992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which North Sea installations are in the process of being decommissioned as of September 2022; and at which yards that work is being conducted.

**Graham Stuart:**

At present approximately 94 decommissioning projects have been approved, all of which are at various stages of execution from onshore planning to offshore removal works. The decommissioning programme often does not include the location of onshore work but must make a commitment to select appropriately licenced contractors and sites to perform the dismantlement work.

**Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[51406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the funding structure of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

Funding allocations for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme are assessed and determined as part of the Government's wider Spending Reviews. The structure of funding provided through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme was assessed when designing the scheme and is reviewed regularly, including ahead of new phases of the scheme being implemented.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[51407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the next phase of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding will be announced.

**Graham Stuart:**

The guidance for the next application window to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, Phase 3b, was published online on 2 August 2022. The application window is expected to open in October 2022.

**■ Small Businesses: Energy****Helen Morgan:**[\[45508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help support small and medium sized businesses with the increase in the cost of energy.

**Graham Stuart:**

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 more details will follow shortly. 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.

The Government is also providing a 50% business rates relief for businesses across the UK and reducing employer national insurance.

**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[49261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make it his policy to introduce emergency energy grants for small and medium-sized enterprises in (a) Battersea and (b) the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

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. The scheme will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and more details will follow shortly. 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.

The Government is also providing a 50% business rates relief for businesses across the UK and reducing employer national insurance.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Corporate Travel Management****Emily Thornberry:**[\[51491\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the reporting requirements set out in his Department's contract with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd., reference CCTM19A03, what the total (a) spend and (b) number of transactions was for (i) air, (ii) rail, (iii) accommodation and (iv) booking fees in each reporting year of the contract.

**Edward Argar:**

This enabling agreement is the framework document for the call off contract to provide Ministerial Air Charter Transport. The contracting authority for the call off

contract is the Cabinet Office on behalf of HMG. The Framework Agreement (RM6016) is held by CCS on behalf of HMG.

All responses under the contract reference CCTM19A03 refer to Air Charter Travel only.

(i) £1,259,382.20 total spend across 19 flights taken since the start of the contract.

(ii, iii) This contract does not support bookings for rail and accommodation.

(iv) Booking fees amounted to £50,515.99 of the total spend quoted above across the 19 flights since the start of the contract.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51492\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the reporting requirements set out in his Department's contract with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd., reference CCTM19A03, what the total (a) value and (b) volume of missed savings was for (i) air, (ii) rail, (iii) accommodation and (iv) booking fees in each reporting year of the contract.

**Edward Argar:**

This enabling agreement is the framework document for the call off contract to provide Ministerial Air Charter Transport. The contracting authority for the call off contract is the Cabinet Office on behalf of HMG. The Framework Agreement (RM6016) is held by CCS on behalf of HMG.

All responses under the contract reference CCTM19A03 refer to Air Charter Travel only.

There are no missed savings as the contract references 'no use, no fee'.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51493\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the reporting requirements set out in his Department's contract with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd., reference CCTM19A03, what the total number of first class bookings was for rail bookings in each reporting year of the contract.

**Edward Argar:**

This enabling agreement is the framework document for the call off contract to provide Ministerial Air Charter Transport. The contracting authority for the call off contract is the Cabinet Office on behalf of HMG. The Framework Agreement (RM6016) is held by CCS on behalf of HMG.

All responses under the contract reference CCTM19A03 refer to Air Charter Travel only.

Contract CCTM19A03 does not cater for rail bookings.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51494\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the reporting requirements set out in his Department's contract with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd.,



reference CCTM19A03, what the total number of non arrivals was that resulted in an accommodation venue applying charges in each reporting year of the contract.

**Edward Argar:**

This enabling agreement is the framework document for the call off contract to provide Ministerial Air Charter Transport. The contracting authority for the call off contract is the Cabinet Office on behalf of HMG. The Framework Agreement (RM6016) is held by CCS on behalf of HMG.

All responses under the contract reference CCTM19A03 refer to Air Charter Travel only.

Contract CCTM19A03 does not cater for accommodation/ venue bookings.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51496\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the reporting requirements set out in his Department's contract with Corporate Travel Management (North) Ltd., reference CCTM19A03, what (a) the average ticket price for bookings of (i) air and (ii) rail and (b) the average room rate for bookings of accommodation was in each reporting year of the contract.

**Edward Argar:**

This enabling agreement is the framework document for the call off contract to provide Ministerial Air Charter Transport. The contracting authority for the call off contract is the Cabinet Office on behalf of HMG. The Framework Agreement (RM6016) is held by CCS on behalf of HMG.

All responses under the contract reference CCTM19A03 refer to Air Charter Travel only.

Contract CCTM19A03 does not cater for ticket bookings of any sort.

■ **Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions**

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[51967\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what criteria does the Civil Service Pension Scheme apply in implementing 59(5) Social Security Pensions Act (SSPA) 1975, resulting in a reduction in public service pension.

**Dave Doogan:**

[\[51968\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what criteria does Civil Service Pension Scheme apply in implementing 59(A) Social Security Pensions Act (SSPA)1975, resulting in no reduction in public service pension.

**Edward Argar:**

The Cabinet Office applies the provisions of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, including those set out in Section 59(5), to the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

The responsibility for making Directions under the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 about when public service pension schemes should not deduct part or all of a



Guaranteed Minimum Pension under section 59(5) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 before applying pension increases sits with HM Treasury.

Such provisions for the indexation of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions (GMPs) by public service pension schemes in specified circumstances are set out in Directions made by HM Treasury under section 59A of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975. Taken together with general provisions for indexing public service pensions under section 59 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, read with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971, these provide for the full indexation of GMPs earned as part of a public service pension in circumstances where those GMPs are not increased through the State Pension.

The latest Section 59A direction is available here:

[Treasury Direction 30.03.2021 FINAL.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## ■ Prime Ministers

**Florence Eshalomi:**

[49813]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what was the cost to the public purse of the removal of (a) furniture and (b) personal items during the change of Prime Minister.

**Edward Argar:**

There was no cost to the public purse. As with previous administrations, the removal of personal property from a Ministerial residence is funded by the departing Minister.

## ■ Stalking

**Rachael Maskell:**

[49712]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of cases of women who have been stalked in (a) York and (b) England in each the last five years.

**Edward Argar:**

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

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

### Attachments:

1. UKSA response to 49712 [[UKSA Response to 49712.pdf](#)]

## COP26

## ■ Forests

**Jim Shannon:**

[49140]

To ask the President of COP26, with reference to point 6 of the Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use which committed signatories to facilitate the

alignment of financial flows with international goals to reverse forest loss and degradation, what steps the Government plans to take to implement that commitment.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49141\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, with reference to the Global Forest Finance pledge announced on 2 November 2021 at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, if he will take steps to help establish an oversight body including indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure the money committed in that pledge is delivered to those communities.

**Alok Sharma:**

The signing of the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use by 145 world leaders committed to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. Alongside this political commitment, an ambitious policy package was announced. Specifically, 12 donor countries pledged to provide \$12 billion (£8.75 billion) of public climate finance from 2021 to 2025 to a new Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP); the UK convened a \$1.7 billion public and private donor pledge to advance Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' (IPLC) forest tenure rights; and 33 financial institutions committed to eliminate investment in activities linked to deforestation.

On point 6, the UK is developing tools to drive transparency in the financial sector, including requirements for UK financial institutions to have a robust transition plan setting out how they will decarbonise as the UK meets its ambitious and legally binding net zero targets. The UK also actively supports the Taskforce on Nature Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), including £2.8m of funding for the development of a framework for corporates and financial institutions to assess, manage and report on their dependencies and impacts on nature.

There was a recent call for evidence regarding updating the green finance strategy, which closed in June 2022. This included questions regarding deforestation. We are in the process of analysing the responses to the call for evidence and will reflect on them, alongside other sources of evidence, including the Global Resource Initiative's (GRI) finance report.

To ensure the money committed in the Pledge is delivered to these communities, a report on the progress of the GFFP will be presented by COP27. The UK is a leading member of the donor coordination group to advance IPLC pledge commitments and report on progress by COP27. The UK will continue to work with donors to ensure pledged funds are delivered to local communities and indigenous peoples.

## DEFENCE

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[49056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications have been (a) received and (b) processed by his Department in (i) July and (ii) August 2022.

**James Heappey:**

In July approximately 1,734 applications were received, of which 902 were duplicates; and approximately 3,000 applications were processed with 1,160 decisions issued.

In August approximately 2,672 applications were received, of which 1,257 were duplicates; and approximately 4,100 applications were processed with 1,669 decisions issued.

■ **Air Force: Training****John Healey:**[\[45205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flying instructors has the RAF had in each year since 2010.

**James Heappey:**

The table below shows the number of Qualified Flying Instructors and Qualified Helicopter Instructors at the rank of Flight Lieutenant and Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force in each year since 2010.

YEAR	NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS
2010	859
2011	869
2012	857
2013	813
2014	776
2015	758
2016	732
2017	715
2018	701
2019	693
2020	707

YEAR	NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS
2021	700
2022	669

These figures include all personnel who held an instructional qualification at the time. Most would have been in student facing instructional roles, but there may have been a small number of individuals that held an instructional qualification while in a non-instructional role, such as staff roles or front-line flying roles.

### ■ Armed Forces: Housing

**John Healey:**

[\[51438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2022 to Question 49068 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many complaints relating to UK Service Family Accommodation have been reported in each year since 2010.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The table below shows the number of complaints relating to UK Service Family Accommodation in each year since 2010, as at September 2022:

CALENDAR YEARS	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
2010	8,348
2011	12,362
2012	9,987
2013	7,725
2014	7,008
2015	10,508
2016	15,694
2017	12,773
2018	10,145
2019	8,421
2020	6,834
2021	6,677
2022	7,505

**John Healey:**

[\[51439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2022 to Question 49069 on Armed Forces: Housing, for what reason his Department does not centrally record complaints received for Service Living Accommodation when it does for Service Family Accommodation.

**John Healey:**

[\[53280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2022 to Question 49069 on Armed Forces: Housing, where information on complaints received regarding Single Living Accommodation is stored.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Service Family Accommodation (SFA) complaints are reported centrally under one area of the Department because SFA is managed under one maintenance contract.

Responsibility for Single Living Accommodation (SLA) is split between individual Top Level Budget Holders; Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, UK Strategic Command and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

Complaints which relate to SLA will be reported and resolved through a number of routes, depending on their nature. They are not reported centrally but directly to individual units on each defence site, the managing Top Level Budget Holder, or to the relevant regional maintenance contractor. As a result, this locally held data could only be collated manually, which would incur disproportionate cost.

## ■ Defence: Shipping

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[52077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the representatives from the (a) maritime industry and (b) UK Chamber of Shipping who attended the last meeting of the Shipping Defence Advisory Council.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

I am unable to provide you with this information as it contains personal data of third parties which cannot be released without the consent of the individuals who attended the last meeting, in accordance with the data protection act.

## ■ Mali: White Phosphorus

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[49789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether British military personnel in Mali have fired white phosphorus munitions.

**James Heapey:**

British Personnel in Mali have never fired, used or stored white phosphorous.

The UK Government condemns the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of any weapon, including incendiary weapons or those that have an incendiary effect, in contravention of international humanitarian law.

**■ Military Bases: Expenditure****Dave Doogan:** [\[51971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what was the total budgetary expenditure on military bases in (a) Hampshire, (b) Wiltshire, (c) Oxfordshire and (d) Scotland in 2012-22.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The data to answer this question requires input from multiple areas of Defence and would not be retrievable without incurring disproportionate cost.

**■ Military Bases: Property Development****Julian Sturdy:** [\[51641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will take steps to provide local communities with input on the redevelopment of barracks sites.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Community consultation is a statutory requirement of any planning application process, and the Ministry of Defence routinely engages with the Local Planning Authority and stakeholders to shape proposals before this point, as we actively wish to see surplus sites used to meet local requirements post military use.

**■ Minesweepers****John Healey:** [\[49579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to MOD Government Major Projects Portfolio Data, 2022, whether he will provide further details on the additional Mission System 6 that has led to the extension of the end date for the Mine Hunting Capability programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Following the Integrated Review and subsequent Annual Budgeting Cycles, Block 2 of the Mine Hunting Capability (MHC) programme has been initiated and is now included in Government Major Projects Portfolio reporting. This does not represent a change to our capability plans but is the next step in the evolution of the exciting and transformational MHC programme which is funded to deliver up to six mission systems and three Logistics Support Vessels.

**■ RAF College Cranwell: Public Statues****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[51459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the RAF has spent on maintaining the Trenchard Statue at RAF Cranwell.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The Royal Air Force has spent no money on maintaining the Trenchard Statue at RAF Cranwell.

## ■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Recruitment

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[52076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when recruitment and retention of civilian seafarers in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was last discussed at the Shipping Defence Advisory Council.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

Recruitment and retention of civilian Seafarers within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is not discussed at the Shipping Defence Advisory Council as it is considered an internal Ministry of Defence matter.

## ■ Royal Military Academy

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[49790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which foreign heads of state have attended passing out parades at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the last 12 months.

**James Heappey:**

It is routine for a foreign Head of State to be invited to represent the Sovereign at one of the three Sovereign's Parades held annually. Additionally, Cadets are able to invite family members to attend their Commissioning Parade.

In the previous 12 months, two foreign Heads of State have attended Commissioning Parades at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as parents:

- HM The Sultan of Oman (July 2022)
- HE Mr Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda (August 2022)

## ■ Unmanned Air Vehicles

**John Healey:** [\[49577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to MOD Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, if he will publish the reason for the £170 million whole-life cost increase for the Protector programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

The reported £170 million increase to the Protector Whole Life Cost Budget was due to an accounting error which included future capability enhancements of this next-generation remotely piloted air system within the Protector Core programme. All programme enhancements are treated independently of the core Protector Programme and funding maintained separately. The £170 million increase has been removed accordingly.

**John Healey:** [\[49578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to MOD Government Major Projects Portfolio Data, 2022, what is the Control Total of the UK Strategic Command Protector Enhance and how has this impacted on the whole-life cost to the Protector programme.

**Alec Shelbrooke:**

UK Strategic Command's Protector Enhance programme is still in the assessment phase and so does not yet have a Control Total. This will be subject to future business case approvals, which have not yet been prepared.

■ **Warships**

**John Healey:** [\[51440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when will the review into the UK's balance between the Royal Navy's surface and sub-surface fleets be completed.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Vice Chief of Defence Staff's review will report its findings in spring 2023.

**John Healey:** [\[51441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place in the Library a copy of the review into balance between the Royal Navy's surface and sub-surface fleets.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Due to the sensitive nature of this review, it will not be formally published for external use.

**John Healey:** [\[51442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the dates of his last meetings with NATO's Secretary General on the Royal Navy's balance between surface and subsurface fleets.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I will await the results of the review before I discuss the outcomes with external stakeholders. The review will predominantly look at future threats and to what extent submarines can play a role in defending against them.

**John Healey:** [\[51443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who will be leading the review into the Royal Navy's balance between surface and sub-surface fleets.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I have asked the Vice Chief of Defence Staff to commission the review.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ **Cooperatives and Social Enterprises: Government Assistance**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[49195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to help to grow (a) cooperatives and (b) social businesses.



**Stuart Andrew:**

The Government strongly supports the co-operative sector and social businesses' contribution to society and the economy. Co-operatives and mutuals contribute to the diversity and resilience of the economy with their democratic structure, their emphasis on the long-term interests of their members and their local focus and commitment. Social businesses create jobs for those excluded from the labour market, directly address social challenges and build social capital within communities.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport works with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and other relevant departments to ensure that government policy helps cooperatives and social businesses to grow and flourish.

The Government has cut the red tape facing the sector through the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and subsequent regulations. More recently, the government has reaffirmed our commitment to the sector through the £150 million community ownership fund, which supports co-operatives and community-owned businesses to take over valuable and viable local assets at risk of closure.

DCMS's support for social businesses includes:

- £485 million of dormant assets funding that has been allocated to social investment, which to date has supported thousands of charities and social enterprises across England to grow their impact and scale their operations
- developing the Social Value Model, in partnership with Cabinet Office - requiring social value to be evaluated in all central government procurement
- launching the VCSE Contract Readiness Fund - inviting bids to enable VCSE organisations to compete alongside other organisations and increase their participation in public service procurement

Work is also underway on plans to meet the following commitment from the Levelling Up White Paper:

“The UK Government will consider how best to encourage social organisations and entrepreneurship to flourish in left-behind places across the UK, building on and augmenting existing support, generating evidence on what social enterprises need to do to thrive in disadvantaged places, and encouraging the next generation of social entrepreneurs.”

**■ Data Protection and Digital Information Bill****Dr Rupa Huq:****[51860]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) parliamentary scrutiny is upheld and (b) personal data and personal health data is protected.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on Monday 18 July 2022. Following the election of the new leader of the Conservative Party, business managers have agreed that the government will not move the Second Reading and other motions relating to the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill to allow ministers to further consider the Bill. Once resumed, Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise it fully as per parliamentary procedure.

The Bill will maintain high standards of protection for personal data, including sensitive healthcare data. At the same time, it will reform the most complex and burdensome parts of the data protection legislation which can impede responsible data use.

**■ Telephone Systems: Optical Fibres****Selaine Saxby:**[\[52073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) progress of the nationwide switch from copper phone lines to fibre and (b) resilience of fibre phone lines in rural areas.

**Julia Lopez:**

The move from traditional to digital telephony, known as Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) migration, is being led by the telecoms industry and not the government.

While DCMS meets regularly with telecoms providers to discuss the progress of their migration, we do not assess overall progress given each provider has their own schedule and plans for the upgrade including how and when they will migrate customers. Regardless, telecoms providers have said they remain committed to the 2025 deadline.

Telecommunications equipment is usually highly resilient and major outages are extremely rare. However, in general, fibre connections are less affected than copper cables by environmental factors, such as temperature and electro-magnetic fluctuations.

**EDUCATION****■ After School Clubs****Bridget Phillipson:**[\[49634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children who have participated in after school clubs in each local authority area in each of the last five years.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department does not hold a central register of wraparound providers from which an accurate assessment can be made about the number of children that have participated in after-school clubs by local authority.

However, the department runs the Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents, which provides national-level estimates around the use of and payments for after school clubs and activities.

Use of after-school clubs and activities as childcare by families over the past five years is detailed in the attached document.

The department does not currently hold statistical data on the number of children that attend after-school clubs or their usage by region or local authority. However, the department conducted a survey of teachers and school leaders in March 2022, which revealed that 65% of primary schools that responded offered after-school childcare. When weighted to be nationally representative, this translates to around 11,000 primary schools. More information can be accessed here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1087043/School\\_and\\_college\\_panel\\_March\\_2022\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1087043/School_and_college_panel_March_2022_Report.pdf).

**Attachments:**

1. 49634\_table [[49634 after school clubs and activities.xls](#)]

**Bridget Phillipson:****[49635]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the average cost of after school clubs in each (a) region and (b) local authority area in England.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department does not hold a central register of wraparound providers from which an accurate assessment of average costs, either by region or local authority in England, for after-school clubs can be made.

The Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents found that the median payment by families for after-school clubs or activities in 2021 was £20 per week (£4.72 per hour). This is a change from a median of £15 per week (£4 per hour) in 2018, and £13 per week (£3.60 per hour) in 2017. More information on the topic can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2017>, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-survey-of-parents-2018>, and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childcare-and-early-years-providers-survey-2021>.

**■ Department for Education: Senior Civil Servants****Bridget Phillipson:****[49636]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on which dates in the past five years there has been a change of the Chief Operating Officer at his Department.

**Jonathan Gullis:**

During the past five years, there has been a change of Chief Operating Officer at the Department for Education on 30 October 2017 and 14 April 2022.

**■ National School Breakfast Programme****Seema Malhotra:**[\[49682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools (a) were eligible for support from the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) in the last academic year and (b) received food orders as part of the NSBP in (i) Hounslow and (ii) Feltham and Heston constituency in the last academic year.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The department is committed to continuing support for school breakfast clubs and we are investing up to £24 million to continue our national programme until the end of the summer term 2023. This funding will support up to 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing, and readiness to learn.

Schools are eligible for the programme if they have 40% or more pupils within bands A-F of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index scale, a nationally recognised indicator of need.

The department does not hold data on school eligibility and food orders at a constituency level.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Animals and Plants: Imports****Hilary Benn:**[\[51446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which (a) plant and (b) animal diseases are screened for when importing products into the UK.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK has a strong, risk-based regulatory regime in place which implements a comprehensive range of the Government's measures across the plant biosecurity continuum (pre-border, at the border, and inland) to minimise biosecurity risks and meet World Trade Organisation standards. Import requirements for Great Britain are in place to guard against a wide range of regulated plant pests and diseases and to detect any new and emerging issues requiring assessment and possible mitigation. These requirements include a prohibition on the highest risk trees and the phytosanitary certification of regulated plants (including trees) which are permitted for import, to provide official confirmation that prescribed conditions have been complied with. Such imports must be pre-notified to the Government and are subject to an

official inspection and surveillance programme. Similar arrangements are in place in Northern Ireland, under the Northern Ireland P rotocol.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. The UK Plant Health Risk Register contains details of over 1400 plant pests and pathogens, 30% of which can affect trees. Risks are reviewed monthly with Ministers and prioritised for action such as further regulation or increased inspections.

The UK requires competent authorities in EU and non-EU countries to provide health certificates to exporters of animals and animal products to the UK. The health certificates are tailored for the species or type of product imported into the UK and sum up a number of compulsory conditions for animals and products of animal origin to be imported into the UK . The certificates require guarantees of freedom from exotic and notifiable animal diseases in the UK, including Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza, Newcastle Disease and also all other exotic <sup>1</sup> and endemic <sup>2</sup> diseases of animals.

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<sup>1</sup> Exotic disease - not normally present in the UK, such as foot and mouth disease

<sup>2</sup> Endemic disease - already present in the UK, such as bovine TB

The [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) page is the main source of information on notifiable and exotic disease available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/notifiable-diseases-in-animals>.

## ■ Desalination

**Mick Whitley:**

**[49787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) necessity and (b) appropriateness of desalination technology for meeting the UK's long-term water challenges.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government recognises the need for new water resources infrastructure, including reservoirs and water transfers, alongside reducing leakage and conserving water to provide a secure supply of water for future generations and to protect our environment.

The National Framework for Water Resources (launched in March 2020) brings together industry, regulators and Government to transform the way we use and look after our water supplies, including the need to reduce demand, halve leakage and develop new supplies.

The water industry is now working in regional groups to deliver the action needed to meet the challenge set out in the Framework to make sure water supplies remain secure. This includes looking at how they will accommodate new buildings and investigating what new infrastructure projects are required, such as desalination.

As part of the current price review round (PR19), Ofwat has allocated a £469 million fund for water companies to expedite and progress the development of new water infrastructure. Additionally, the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) has been formed to help accelerate the development of new water infrastructure and design future regulatory frameworks to enable this development.

## ■ Environment Protection: EU Law

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[49749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department will take to (a) strengthen environmental protections as part of any review into retained EU law and regulations and (b) ensure the UK maintains comparable levels of environmental protections with the EU.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In reviewing retained EU law, Defra's aim is to ensure that environmental law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved environmental outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure the UK regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK.

The UK is a world leader in environmental protection and the Government has clear environmental and climate goals, such as those set out in the Environment Act, the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Net Zero Strategy respectively. We are committed to delivering our legally binding target to halt nature's decline by 2030. Any changes to environmental regulation will need to support those goals as well as our international commitments including those with the EU.

## ■ Environment Protection: Standards

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[49750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department will take to (a) raise environmental standards in the UK and (b) provide the necessary resources to his Department's executive agencies to enforce those standards.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Government has already introduced a range of domestic measures in the Environment Act 2021 which will ensure we continue to drive forward environmental standards and are transparent about environmental protections. Through the Act, we will clean up the country's air and water, increase biodiversity, reduce waste, and better use resources.

These changes will be driven by new legally binding environmental targets and enforced by the Office for Environmental Protection, which will hold the Government and public bodies to account on their environmental obligations.

As set out in the Nature Recovery Green Paper, we are considering how we organise Defra and its Arm's-length Bodies to deliver our long-term targets. We are due to publish a response to the Green Paper in the near future.

## ■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

**Martyn Day:** [\[51844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has assessed the potential merits of introducing amendments to fishing licenses to prohibit all types of destructive fishing in Marine Protected Areas.

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[51857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to amend fishing licenses in 2023 to reference destructive fishing.

**Claire Hanna:** [\[52063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to review restrictions on destructive fishing methods in Marine Protected Areas for fishing licenses granted from 2023 onward.

**Mark Spencer:**

Marine conservation is a devolved competence and the following information on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) therefore relates to England only.

The Fisheries Act 2020 requires that all vessels fishing commercially in UK waters must have a licence to do so. All licences have a set of conditions which specify the area in which fishing is authorised, the time period permitted for fishing, the quantities and description of which species may be caught and the permitted fishing method. These conditions are subject to periodic review and are based on scientific evidence.

98 MPAs in English inshore waters already have byelaws in place to protect sensitive features from damaging fishing activities and the first four offshore byelaws have now been established. The Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and Marine Management Organisation continue to assess and implement measures to manage damaging fishing within MPAs. We are aiming to have all MPAs in English waters protected from damaging fishing activity by 2024.

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[51856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning all types of destructive fishing from Marine Protected Areas.

**Mark Spencer:**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a devolved competency and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

The Marine Management Organisation and the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities assess on a site-by-site basis which fishing activities could prevent MPAs from achieving their conservation objectives. Byelaws are developed using an evidence-led process to determine what management is required to protect sites and to not unduly restrict legitimate fishing activity.



98 MPAs in English inshore waters already have byelaws in place to protect sensitive features from damaging fishing activities and the first four offshore byelaws have now been established. A Call for Evidence on byelaws in 13 more MPAs has recently closed. We aim to have protection in place for all our offshore MPAs by 2024.

In July, we also launched a consultation on five candidate Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) 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.

## ■ School Milk

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[49667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the school milk subsidy scheme includes milk alternatives in the event that children have dairy allergies.

**Mark Spencer:**

The school milk subsidy is limited to milk and specific eligible dairy products and there are no plans to change this. The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. While these require milk to be available, we also expect schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, to reflect for example dietary or cultural needs. Schools are enabled by the guidance to provide a variety of other drinks including plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium and combination and flavoured variations of these drinks. Further information is available on gov.uk at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/allergy-guidance-for-schools>.

A joint Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)/Committee on Toxicity (COT) Working Group was established in Autumn 2021 to conduct a benefit/risk assessment considering both nutritional and toxicological aspects associated with consumption of plant-based drinks by the UK population. The work of the Working Group is ongoing. The outcome of this assessment will provide integrated advice to the Department of Health and Social Care and other government departments on policy in this area. More information is available at the following link.

[Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition \(SACN\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/scientific-advisory-committee-on-nutrition)

## ■ Weed Control

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[49798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to inform the public about the spread of (a) Japanese knotweed and



(b) other harmful weeds; and if his Department will take steps to provide further support to the public to help tackle these weeds.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the threats posed by invasive species, including Japanese knotweed, and has a comprehensive Great Britain Non-native Species Strategy designed to tackle these threats. Japanese knotweed is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to allow the plant to escape or cause it to grow in the wild. The Weeds Act 1959 allows the Secretary of State for Defra to take statutory action to control the spread of five other harmful weeds, including common ragwort which is the most reported of these.

The Government has developed guidance on how to prevent the spread of Japanese knotweed and other harmful weeds, as well as how to treat and dispose of them, which can be found on GOV.UK:

[How to stop invasive non-native plants from spreading - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-stop-invasive-non-native-plants-from-spreading)

The Government also run awareness raising campaigns such as 'Be Plant Wise' and Invasive Species Week, as well as providing species information and online training materials on biosecurity on the [GB NNSS website](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gb-nnss-website).

In addition, the [Code of Practice on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/code-of-practice-on-how-to-prevent-the-spread-of-ragwort) supports the public by providing guidance on the most appropriate means of ragwort control, taking into account both animal welfare and environmental considerations.

Defra also continues to fund biocontrol research to tackle Japanese knotweed. It is hoped that this will provide a cost and time effective way of managing this species.

■ **Wines: Imports**

**David Warburton:**

**[51896]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to reach a decision on the new timeline for the introduction of import labels for EU wine that was due to come into force on 1 October 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

I am pleased to say that a decision to extend the current easements for wine importer labelling has recently been made. The Food Information (Amendment of Transitional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2022, which will come into effect on 30 September 2022, will extend the current importer labelling arrangements for wine until 31 December 2023. This means that it will still be permissible for wine marketed in Great Britain to show an EU importer or bottler on a wine label, eliminating any financial re-labelling burden operators were previously facing. The introduction of these provisions has been warmly welcomed by the UK Wine trade.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Afghanistan: Universities**

**Hilary Benn:** [\[51444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure the security of university and college lecturers in Afghanistan who (a) worked for the British Council and (b) made applications under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Leo Docherty:**

Under the third pathway of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), and in year one, the Government is considering eligible, at-risk British Council contractors for resettlement (as well as eligible at-risk Gardaworld contractors and Chevening alumni). In the first year, we will offer up to 1500 places to eligible at-risk British Council contractors, GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni, including their eligible family members. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are reviewing each Expression of Interest (EOI) to assess if the eligibility criteria have been met, and have started notifying individuals of the outcome. Expressions of Interest are being considered in the order they were received. Some are being prioritised because their role or the projects they worked on mean they are particularly at risk, or because there are exceptionally compelling circumstances.

**Hilary Benn:** [\[51445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received any reports that university and college lecturers who worked for the British Council in Afghanistan and are still in the country have received letters from the Taliban requiring them to complete a detailed identity form which focuses on their experience working with foreign organisations.

**Leo Docherty:**

We are aware of reports that some British Council contractors who are in Afghanistan have received requests from the Taliban to provide detailed information on their circumstances. Eligible at-risk British Council contractors have been able to express interest in resettlement in the UK under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Pathway 3 through an online process. ACRS Pathway 3 provides a safe and legal route for up to 1500 eligible at-risk British Council contractors, Gardaworld contractors, Chevening alumni and their family members to come to the United Kingdom and rebuild their lives.

**■ Azerbaijan: Armenia**

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[51866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the violence on Armenia's border with Azerbaijan on 13 September 2022.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government continues to work with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to encourage them to engage with the appropriate international processes, including talks led by the EU, to secure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and all other related issues. Against the background of renewed hostilities and loss of life, I spoke to Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov on 15 and 17 September respectively to stress the importance of regional stability and negotiations without pre-conditions. His Majesty's Ambassador in Yerevan and Baku have taken similar steps, in close coordination with partners.

**Sarah Olney:**[\[51902\]](#)

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

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government continues to work with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments to encourage them to engage with the appropriate international processes, including talks led by the EU, to secure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and all other related issues. Against the background of renewed hostilities and loss of life, I spoke to Armenian Foreign Minister Mirzoyan and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Bayramov on 15 and 17 September respectively to stress the importance of regional stability and negotiations without pre-conditions. His Majesty's Ambassadors in Yerevan and Baku have taken similar steps, in close coordination with partners.

**■ Bahrain: Human Rights****Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[49609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to (a) ensure the welfare of Bahraini opposition leader Hasan Mushaima and (b) prevent human rights abuses in Bahrain.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Officials and ministers have regular discussions with senior Bahraini counterparts on human rights, including most recently during Minister Milling's visit to Bahrain from 2-3 July. We continue to follow and discuss the case of Hassan Mushaima and others with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies. We continue to encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

**■ Bermuda: Cannabis****Owen Thompson:**[\[49732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential constitutional implications of the UK Government not providing assent to the Bermuda Cannabis Licensing Bill 2022.

**Owen Thompson:**[\[49733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department had with the Government of Bermuda on the Bermuda Cannabis Licensing Bill 2022 before announcing that the UK Government would not Assent to the Bill as drafted.

**Jesse Norman:**

Bermuda's constitution provides for the Governor to reserve assent of legislation which do not appear to be compatible with international obligations. The Foreign Secretary carefully considered the Bermuda Cannabis Licensing Bill 2022 and concluded that it is contrary to the UK's and Bermuda's obligations under the UN Conventions, which prohibit the legalisation of cannabis for recreational use. The UK is responsible for the Overseas Territories' compliance with international law, and assent was not therefore given. Prior to the legislation being presented for assent, UK officials offered and continue to make themselves available to the Government of Bermuda to discuss the policy and how the UK can support Bermuda.

■ **Ecuador: Cocaine****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[49583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of reports that Ecuadorian police have seized 960kg of cocaine in the Pacific port of Guayaquil that was expected to be shipped to the UK.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK Government worked with authorities in Ecuador to make this seizure possible and to mitigate the drugs threat to the UK. Restricting upstream supply is a key part of the UK Government's plan to break drug supply chains as set out in "From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives". This requires a comprehensive approach combining a strong law enforcement response with leveraging of the UK's diplomatic and overseas policy networks.

■ **Ethiopia: Eritrea****Patrick Grady:**[\[45881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the displacement of Eritrean refugees from the Barahle refugee camp in the Afar region of Ethiopia.

**Patrick Grady:**[\[45882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support organisations working to ensure the safety and security of the Barahle refugee camp in the Afar region of Ethiopia.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The UK works closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) to support refugees in Ethiopia, including Eritrean refugees. Between 2016 and 2022 the UK contributed £34.8 million to assistance to refugees in Ethiopia in partnership with UNHCR. The British Embassy in Addis Ababa speaks regularly to the Government of Ethiopia, separately and in coordination with other countries about the safety, security and access to rights of all refugees in Ethiopia, including Eritreans.

The return to conflict between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian Government is catastrophic for the people of Ethiopia. Conflict is increasing displacement and making humanitarian access even more difficult. The UK is urging all parties to the conflict to guarantee unfettered humanitarian access by immediately ceasing hostilities.

**■ Iraq: Politics and Government****Mr David Jones:**[\[49595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) negotiations to form a new government and (b) political situation in Iraq.

**Gillian Keegan:**

We are concerned by rising political tensions in Iraq and welcome calls for dialogue. We hope that political leaders in Iraq can compromise and seek a solution that prioritises the stability of Iraq. The urgent priorities of delivering effective public services and reforming the economy are being delayed by the political standoff.

**■ Kenya: Politics and Government****Ruth Jones:**[\[45552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the political situation in Kenya.

**Ruth Jones:**[\[46041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the (a) political and (b) security situation in the Republic of Kenya.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Kenya is a regional and continental leader as well as a strategic and historic partner to the UK. On 5 September, following Kenya's Supreme Court ruling to uphold the results of the 9 August Presidential election, Minister Ford, my predecessor as Minister for Africa, congratulated President-elect Rt. Hon. William Ruto.

The UK welcomes the commitment President-elect Ruto has made to governing in a spirit of inclusivity and reconciliation and welcome the crucial role played by his opponent, Rt. Hon. Raila Amolo Odinga, over the years, in contributing to the evolution of democracy in Kenya. We also applaud the rising role of women in

Kenyan politics and the improvements in this made since 2013 and 2017, in part due to the work of civil society organisations and other non-state actors to equitable participation.

We look forward to continuing our work with the next Kenyan Government and all the country's elected leaders and ensuring the longevity of the UK-Kenya partnership.

## ■ Latin America: Malaria

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[49585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the development of a Malaria vaccine on health standards in Latin America.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK welcomes progress in the development of vaccines for malaria and applauds the impact of British expertise and innovation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendation in October 2021 for the use of the new Mosquirix (RTS,S) vaccine for the prevention of plasmodium falciparum malaria in children living in Sub Saharan Africa and in other regions with moderate to high transmission is a significant milestone.

Other cost-effective and proven malaria interventions must continue alongside the roll out of any vaccine to ensure high levels of protection against the disease. The UK is committed to tackling malaria, which is closely linked to our ambition to end preventable deaths of mothers, babies and newborns. The UK works with partners such as Gavi, the vaccine alliance, to improve access to life-saving vaccines.

## ■ Mexico: Drugs

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[49584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Mexican counterpart on the ongoing conflict in the south of Mexico between the Familia Michoacana and Jalisco New Generation drug cartels.

**Jesse Norman:**

We are deeply shocked by the increasing level of violence across Mexico.

The British Embassy in Mexico City regularly engages on this with the Mexican authorities and with civil society, including monitoring violence trends in the country and offering assistance in the field of rule of law.

Colleagues from the International Policing Assistance Services (IPAS), accompanied by officials from the British Embassy in Mexico City, visited Mexico in March 2020 to advise the Secretary General of the National Public Security System in Mexico (SESNSP) in reviewing Mexican policing techniques and to progress police reform. Following their report, UK experts plan to undertake further visits to Mexico to assist the SESNSP with the next stage of their police reform process.

## ■ Myanmar: British Nationals Abroad

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the safety of UK citizens in Myanmar.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK Government has closely monitored the security situation in Myanmar following the coup in February 2021. We have kept British Nationals updated of the risks they face, including through regular updates to our travel advice, most recently on 5th September.

## ■ Myanmar: International Criminal Court

**Rushanara Ali:**

[\[47539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the US Government declaring its principal support for a referral of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court, whether the UK government supports in principle a referral of Myanmar to that court.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK is clear that there must be accountability for the atrocities committed in Myanmar. We condemn the continuing grave human rights violations by the Myanmar Armed Forces, as well as historic atrocities against the Rohingya. The UK is supportive, in principle, of any attempts to bring these issues before the International Criminal Court (ICC) where they can be scrutinised.

However, with regards to a referral by the UN Security Council, our assessment remains that there is insufficient support amongst Security Council members for a referral at this time. It will not advance the cause of accountability for an ICC referral to fail to win Security Council support or to be vetoed; such a result would only give comfort to the Myanmar Armed Forces and reduce the pressure they currently face.

## ■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[51975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the Government of Pakistan on the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan.

**Leo Docherty:**

Pakistan is one of the FCDO's human rights priority countries and protecting Freedom of Religious Beliefs (FoRB), including those of Ahmadi Muslims, is an integral part of our engagement. Lord Ahmad publicly condemned the recent targeted killings of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and Christian Turner, the British High Commissioner in Islamabad, raised the attacks with Pakistan's Human Rights Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. We will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the rights of all its citizens, regardless of their religion or belief.



**■ UK-EU Partnership Council**

**Kevin Brennan:** [\[51455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the next meeting of the EU-UK Partnership Council will take place.

**Leo Docherty:**

As provided for in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the next meeting of the UK-EU Partnership Council will take place before the end of the year.

**■ Zimbabwe: Droughts**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[46019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken through (a) international diplomacy, (b) Official Development Assistance, or (c) other means, to tackle drought in Zimbabwe.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[46020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken through (a) international diplomacy, (b) Official Development Assistance, or (c) other means, to tackle food poverty in Zimbabwe.

**Gillian Keegan:**

Zimbabwe is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the severe impacts of climate change and extreme weather. Despite a good harvest in 2021, 2.9 million people in rural and urban areas were classified as food insecure from October 2021 to April 2022. The 2022 harvest, particularly of maize, will likely be substantially lower than in 2021. The Zimbabwean Government statistics project 3.8 million people will fall into cereal food insecurity at the peak of the lean season in early 2023.

Since 2019 the UK has committed £50.4 million through the Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Resilience Programme (ZHARP), managed by the UN World Food Programme, to provide food aid and cash transfers to the poorest and most vulnerable Zimbabweans. In 2020, 413,000 extremely vulnerable people received food assistance in rural areas. From late 2021 onwards UK humanitarian assistance has focused on urban vulnerability with 10,125 people currently receiving monthly cash-based transfers. The UK is also helping reduce overall food insecurity and reliance on food aid by supporting resilience building programmes promoting climate-smart agriculture, solar irrigation, increased productivity for small farmers, better nutrition and dietary diversity.



## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Back Pain: Steroid Drugs**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[49145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people who have received steroid injections for back pain.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

### ■ **Defibrillators**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[49598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to improve access to Automatic External Defibrillators.

**Will Quince:**

The Government is currently considering ways in which it can improve access to automatic external defibrillators (AEDs). Organisations in England are encouraged to consider purchasing a defibrillator in first-aid equipment, particularly for places where there are high concentrations of people. With growing public awareness and acceptance of AEDs, many community defibrillators have since been provided in public locations through national lottery funding, community fundraising schemes, workplace funding or by charities.

### ■ **Dementia: Clinical Trials**

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[49695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions her Department has had with (a) BEIS, (b) NIHR and (c) the MHRA about the UK's ability to host large multi-site clinical trials for dementia.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the National Institute for Health and Care Research to support the delivery of the Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission, led by the Office for Life Sciences. The Mission will accelerate the development of novel 'precision' treatments in neurodegeneration and increase the number of clinical trials, including large multi-site clinical trials. The Office for Life Sciences has had held initial discussions with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency on the Mission.

**■ Electronic Cigarettes: Children**

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[49600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether she will take additional steps to prevent (a) shops and (b) other licensed sellers from selling e-cigarettes to people under the age of 18.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The Department provides central funding to local authorities to support local trading standards activity to enforce these regulations. It is for local authorities to decide how this funding is allocated across local services, including how to address the underage sale of e-cigarettes. The Department provides advice to small businesses via the online Business Companion site, which includes advice on compliance with age of sale requirements.

However, we are exploring which additional measures could be introduced to prevent the sale of e-cigarettes to people under the age of 18 years old.

**■ Health Services: Weather**

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[49597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she will take to protect the NHS from additional pressure over the winter months.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The National Health Service is planning to substantially increase capacity and resilience in to protect the NHS from additional pressure during the winter. Bed capacity will be increased by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, including new physical beds and expanding the use of innovative virtual wards to treat patients safely at home.

This is in addition to an integrated COVID-19 booster and flu vaccination programme to reduce admissions caused by these viruses. The National Discharge Taskforce aims to reduce delayed discharge across acute, mental health and community care settings by working with social care partners to implement best practice, increase bed capacity and improve patient flow through hospitals.

**■ Mental Illness: Assistance Animals**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[49669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her department has made of the potential feasibility of providing assistance dogs to people with a mental health diagnosis of (a) depression and (b) anxiety.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

No specific assessment has been made.

## ■ Monkeypox: Disease Control

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[49599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of appointing a Minister or Official to lead on the Government's response to the MonkeyPox outbreak and vaccine procurement.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) was established to lead on the planning for, prevention of and response to external health threats. As an executive agency of the Department, the UKHSA is responding to the monkeypox outbreak, working across Government and the health service, including the devolved administrations and local government. The UKHSA provides oversight and accountability to Ministers on the operational response.

## ■ NHS: Pensions

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[49708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of making the NHS Pension Scheme tax unregistered for the purposes of helping to provide predictability for NHS workers undertaking overtime.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government is reviewing the interaction between taxation and pensions in the National Health Service. Making the NHS Pension Scheme into a tax-unregistered scheme would not benefit the vast majority of NHS staff, who would lose income tax relief on contributions and the option of a tax-free lump sum on retirement.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Uprating

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[49596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Minimum Income Guarantee rates; and whether she plans to uprate these in line with inflation.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The baseline levels of the Minimum Income Guarantee rates are reviewed on an annual basis. Following the last review, it was assessed that the Minimum Income Guarantee should increase in line with inflation from 6 April 2022. The next review is due in January 2023.

## ■ Social Services

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[51750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken to transfer people waiting to be discharged from hospital to adult social care settings.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Government is allocating an additional £500 million for social care this winter to support the safe discharge of patients from hospital, including by increasing capacity in the social care workforce. This funding is in addition to the '100-day discharge challenge' launched in early July 2022 to reassert best practice through 10 priority discharge activities in all hospitals.

**■ Social Services: Fees and Charges****Karin Smyth:**[\[51748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions her Department has had with the local authorities that are trailblazing the new adult social care charging system on the adequacy of the funding made available to local authorities for implementing those reforms.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department is working with the six trailblazer local authorities implementing early adult social care charging reform. All trailblazer local authorities have received funding towards the costs associated with implementing charging reform in an accelerated timeframe and will receive additional funding for the early extension to the means test and cap on care costs. The Institute for Fiscal Studies positively assessed the modelling for these reforms in 2018 and in 2020, the Government Actuarial Department concluded that the model is appropriate for estimating the costs of reforms.

**Karin Smyth:**[\[51749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and (b) local authorities on the potential impact of the cost of social care reforms on levels of council tax.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There have been no recent discussions.

**■ Social Services: Finance****Karin Smyth:**[\[51751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the potential impact of increasing the means testing threshold for people accessing adult social care on funding for local authorities.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There have been no recent discussions on this specific issue.

**Karin Smyth:**[\[51752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of increasing the means testing threshold

for people accessing adult social care on the number of new people who will access adult social care in England.

**Neil O'Brien:**

In 2020/21, 360,000 older adults and 256,000 younger adults in long-term care benefited from state support. We estimate that by 2027/28, in steady state the Government's charging reforms to be implemented in October 2023 will benefit approximately an additional 90,000 older care users. For adults aged under 65 years old, we estimate that by 2027/28 approximately 20,000 additional users will receive state support. Of those 90,000 older adults, we estimate that approximately 40,000 will benefit from the changes to the means test and 50,000 will benefit from the cap or the combinations of the cap and the extended means test. For adults under 65 years old, of the 20,000 users we estimate that approximately 11,000 will benefit from the changes to the means test and 9,000 will benefit from the cap.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**John Healey:**

[\[49561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan citizens who relocated to the UK under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme are in bridging accommodation as of 8 September 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Through Operation Warm Welcome, Afghans resettling in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be supported in accessing accommodation alongside the vital health, education, and support into employment they need, to fully integrate into our society.

As stated in the recently published, '[Afghan Resettlement: Operational Data](#)' factsheet, at 12 August 2022, the UK:

- Has welcomed 21,450 people to the UK from Afghanistan - or a neighbouring country - since June 2021.
- Is providing temporary accommodation for 9,667 people in hotels.

Officials are working at pace to assure information relating to the individuals resettling in the UK under our bespoke schemes for Afghans on case working systems. Once this work concludes, the Home Office will include Afghan resettlement statistics in its quarterly Immigration Statistics publications.

Until then the factsheet will be updated every quarter – with the next iteration scheduled for publication on 24 November 2022.

## ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[52043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the number of people in Afghanistan who are eligible to claim asylum in the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it, in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. However, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to travel to the UK to seek asylum.

Whilst we sympathise with people in difficult situations around the world, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

Our bespoke relocation and resettlement schemes for Afghan people are, however, providing safe and legal routes for those affected by events in Afghanistan to start new lives in the UK.

Any current or former staff who worked for, or with, the UK Government and are assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life are eligible to apply for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). So far we have relocated around 10,300 eligible Afghan citizens and their family members under the ARAP scheme since it opened in April 2021.

## ■ Asylum: Housing

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[51705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times the emergency services attended incidents in accommodation funded by her Department in the latest period for which data is available.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Data collected through the Fire and Rescue Service Incident Recording System (IRS) does not include data on the ownership or funding of properties attended by the fire and rescue service.

The Home Office collects data on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), with this data including the location of the incident and type of property affected. This data is published in a variety of publications, available here: [Fire statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics).

## ■ Asylum: Rwanda

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[51855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish a cost-benefit analysis of her Department's Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda.

**Tom Pursglove:**

There are no plans for a cost-benefit analysis of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda to be published.

A Ministerial Direction was issued ahead of this policy proceeding and relevant letters have been published. Uncertainty is to be expected with a partnership as innovative and ground-breaking as this. As the Permanent Secretary's letter states, there are potentially significant savings to be realised from deterring people entering the UK illegally. However, because such a deterrent effect cannot be quantified with sufficient certainty, Ministerial Direction was required to proceed.

Actual spend will be reported as part of the annual Home Office Reports and Accounts in the usual way.

## ■ Batteries: Lithium

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[52069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many lithium-ion battery fire incidents were recorded in the UK in 2021.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Data collected through the Fire and Rescue Service Incident Recording System (IRS) does not include data on whether fire incidents attended were caused by or involved lithium-ion batteries.

The Home Office collects data on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), with this data including the cause of the fire and the source of ignition. This data is published in a variety of publications, available here: [Fire statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-statistics).

## ■ British Nationality and Visas: Domestic Abuse

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[49649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support victims of domestic violence who are applying for (a) visas and (b) citizenship from within the UK.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[49650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of (a) the number of domestic violence victims applying for visas and (b) the length of time those victims are waiting for visas to be granted and issued.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority for this Government and we are committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. Anyone who has suffered domestic abuse must be treated as a victim first and foremost, regardless of their immigration status.

The Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) allows for eligible migrant partners to apply for the lifting of the no recourse to public funds condition associated with their leave, enabling the victim to access welfare benefits while their application for indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse (DVILR) is made and considered. We aim to consider all DVILR applications within six months and applicants have access to public funds and permission to stay in their own right, until a decision on their application is made. This removes the need for them to remain with their sponsor on whom they may have been financially dependent or reliant on for their permission to stay in the UK.

To be eligible for DVILR an individual's last grant of leave must have been on a spouse, civil partner, unmarried partner or same sex partner visa in a relationship with a British citizen or settled person. Other cohorts, such as those with refugee leave or the partners of those with pre-settled status via the EU Settlement Scheme, are also eligible to apply for DVILR. Applicants who are destitute are exempt from paying a fee for this application.

Data on the number of applications and performance under the DV route are published quarterly, with the latest quarter available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-q2-2022>.

Following the Government's review of support for migrant victims in 2020, last year we launched the Support for Migrant Victims Scheme.

The 12-month pilot, run by Southall Black Sisters and their delivery partners, and supported with £1.5 million of Government funding, has provided wraparound support services for migrant victims of domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds. Support includes: accommodation, subsistence, and counselling.

The pilot and independent evaluation aims to ensure that we have a robust evidence base to inform future policy decisions surrounding our support for migrant victims. The evaluation will be producing a final report later in 2022.

In the interim, we will provide £1.4 million in 2022-23 to continue to fund support for migrant victims of domestic abuse, whilst we take on board vital lessons learned from the pilot to inform future policy decisions.

**■ Crimes of Violence and Harassment: CCTV****Rachael Maskell:****[49713]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what obligations police forces have to collate CCTV evidence when a person reports allegations of (a) harassment or (b) assault to the police.



**Jeremy Quin:**

There are no set requirements from Government on the collection of CCTV evidence during investigations. The police are operationally independent, and we would expect them to investigate all allegations of crime thoroughly and proportionately.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 provides the police with core powers of entry and search to arrest someone and/or seize items of evidential value in the investigation of a criminal offence.

**■ Home Office: Fees and Charges****Kevin Brennan:**[\[51456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how decisions on fee waiver applications are communicated to applicants.

**Kevin Brennan:**[\[51457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of applications for leave to remain expired because applicants had not responded to decisions sent by email relating to fee waiver requests in the latest period for which data is available.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Applicants wishing to apply for an entry clearance fee waiver must do so by submitting an online application form. Once assessed, a decision on the fee waiver application is sent by email to the email address specified on the application form by either the applicant or their representative.

Applications for Leave to Remain fee waivers are mandated to be completed online, to receive a decision by email. However, in exceptional circumstances leave to remain fee waiver applications can be submitted on a paper form, in which case we will offer the applicant the choice of a paper or electronic decision.

Child Citizenship fee waiver applications can also be submitted on paper or online. These decisions may be despatched by email or post accordingly.

It is the applicant's (or their representative's) responsibility to monitor their email inbox and 'spam' folder in anticipation of our decision email.

Information on the number of applicants whose leave to remain expired following the issue of a fee waiver decision of which the applicant was not aware, is not captured. To recover this information would require a manual examination of each individual case and would thus incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Home Office: Members' Constituency Work****Anne Marie Morris:**[\[51668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the communication received by the hon. Member from Newton Abbot from her Department on 6 December 2022 stating that the Department proposes to respond to multiple

constituent enquiries from hon. Members in a single letter, what advice her Department has received about the compatibility of those proposals with GDPR requirements.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The multi-response approach is compliant with GDPR guidelines. As is standard practice, MP's offices are expected to ensure that they only share the information obtained from the Home Office with the relevant constituent to ensure compliance.

■ **Home Office: Work Experience**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[51675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many young people aged eighteen or younger have undertaken work experience in her Department in the last 12 months.

**Tom Pursglove:**

There have been no young people aged eighteen or younger who have undertaken any formal work experience programme in the Home Office during the last 12 months.

■ **Home Office: Written Questions**

**Dan Carden:** [\[51917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Question 33899 tabled by the hon. Member for Walton on 11 July 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

PQ 33899 has been answered and was published on Hansard on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

■ **Immigration: Afghanistan**

**Stephen Farry:** [\[53564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many full time equivalent staff in her Department work on Afghanistan-related immigration cases.

**Stephen Farry:** [\[53565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer given on 20 September 2022 to Question 46210, on Refugees: Afghanistan, how many full time equivalent staff in her Department are responsible for processing ACRS referrals.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Over 15,000 people were supported to come to the UK directly during Operation Pitting, and more than 4000 have since arrived.

We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure

sufficient resources are in place to meet demand, including from pressures relating to the situation in Afghanistan.

The Government is committed to doing all it can to support those most in need and those at risk who have had to flee Afghanistan.

## ■ Immigration: Afghanistan and Ukraine

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[49652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of closing the Home Office staff surgery in the Atrium of in Portcullis House.

**Tom Pursglove:**

To mitigate 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.

## ■ Immigration: Applications

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[49651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of how much time it takes on average for applicants of UK (a) visas, (b) nationality, (c) right to remain and (d) asylum to receive back the official documents they submitted as part of their applications once a decision on their application has been reached.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office does not hold the requested information. For the majority of our visa routes, we are moving to a digitalised system whereby the customers' documents are scanned and uploaded to our system digitally, removing the need for physical documents to be submitted and retained.

For customers and claimants who submit their official documents to a Service and Support Centre (SSC) for consideration, the Home Office aims to return their documents as quickly as possible, in-line with published guidance. Further information can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [retention of documents \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/retention-of-documents)

Customers attending a Visa Application Centre (VAC) overseas will have their passport retained by the commercial partner whilst a decision is made on their application. Once a decision has been made, the commercial partner will contact the customer to invite them to attend the VAC to collect their passport and decision. The length of time that a passport is retained varies depending on the route that the customer has applied to. For added convenience, customers also have the option of purchasing the 'Keep my Passport' service, which allows them to retain their passport whilst a decision on their application is being made.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Navendu Mishra:** [\[49797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Stockport, reference NM15770.

**Tom Pursglove:**

A response has been sent to the hon. Member.

**John Penrose:** [\[51586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Director-General of HM Passport Office plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of (a) 30 June and (b) 11 August 2022 on behalf of his constituent Catherine Kisbey-Green.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 5 August.

**■ Migrant Workers: General Practitioners****Afzal Khan:** [\[51960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to encourage GP Practices to become approved sponsors of international medical graduates.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Home Office have already delivered a range of measures to support the health and care sector to recruit 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.

We strongly encourage more GP surgeries to become Home Office approved sponsors, as this is the best way for the sector to retain international medical graduates as GPs, providing them with the ability to continue to renew their visa while living in the UK and to qualify for permanent settlement in due course.

Sponsorship is straightforward and business-friendly; the majority of sponsors on our register are SMEs, much like GP surgeries are likely to be. The Government is working to increase the number of GP Practices registered as Home Office sponsors.

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.

**■ Migrants: Disability****Sir Stephen Timms:** [\[51410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to publish her assessment of the impact of No Recourse to Public Funds on those identified as having a disability, as set out in her Department's Policy Equality Statement.

**Tom Pursglove:**

There are currently no plans to publish any assessments of the impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds policy on specific cohorts. However the Home Office is happy to receive any information and analysis that Members hold which would contribute to the ongoing assessments of all our policies and their impacts on those with protected characteristics.

**■ Nationality****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[51602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of recognising (a) English, (b) Irish, (c) Scottish and (d) Welsh as distinct nationalities within nationalities and immigration legislation.

**Tom Pursglove:**

British citizenship is the nationality defined in the British Nationality Act 1981, held by those with a close connection to the UK. There are no plans to change this.

Although we do not distinguish between nationalities within the United Kingdom, we do recognise the rich and unique contribution the Welsh, Scots Gaelic, and Irish languages make to our United Kingdom. Currently, all applicants applying for citizenship are required to have passed the Life in the UK (LitUK) test and, while the Life in the UK Handbook is only available in English, the test can also be taken in Welsh or Scots Gaelic, which are the only other languages currently specified in statute as requirements for naturalisation.

We are assessing the potential merits of including recognition of regional languages more broadly in our immigration system and will provide our conclusion in due course.

**■ Night-time Economy: Females****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional support her Department recommends local police forces provide to ensure that women can access high quality support during the night time economy in their locality.

**Jeremy Quin:**

This Government is committed to protecting all victims of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and is working in partnership with police forces across England and Wales to keep victims safe.

Since October 2021, £30 million has been invested for projects with a focus on protecting women in their communities through Round Three of the Safer Streets Fund and the pilot Safety of Women at Night Fund.

An additional £50 million for 111 projects has been invested through Round Four of the Safer Streets Fund, which has a focus on tackling violence against women and girls in public places, as well as neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour.

To support delivery of our commitments set out in the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, we have supported the introduction of a full-time National Policing Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls, DCC Maggie Blyth, who has been in post since November 2021 and has been working closely with Government to coordinate the policing response to VAWG crimes.

### ■ **Offensive Weapons: Crime**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[51674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she made of the number of crimes involving a machete in (a) North Yorkshire and (b) England in each of the last five years.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Home Office collects information from the police on offences involving knives or sharp instruments but it is not possible to separately identify whether or not the weapon was a machete.

### ■ **Passports: Children**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[51674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the cost of (a) applying for and (b) renewing a passport for people under the age of 18 who are participating in a school trip.

**Tom Pursglove:**

In line with HM Treasury's Managing Public Money Guidance, the passport office reviews all fees annually to ensure they only recover the full cost of providing the service which includes a contribution for consular services and costs for processing passport holders at UK borders.

Reviews also include the fee charged for services such as collective passports, which are available for various group trips including schools, and where used there is a single charge to the school and as such, no charge for parents of individual under-18s attending the trip.

Where any fee concessions are made to particular groups it means that the other groups of applicants would have to subsidise those groups by paying higher fees.

### ■ **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022: Impact Assessments**

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[51651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2022 to Question 33778 on Public Sector: Crimes of Violence, when she plans to publish an economic impact assessment of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The economic impact assessment for the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 will be published in due course.

**Refugees: Afghanistan****Seema Malhotra:**[\[51670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to help secure the safety of those eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme who remain in Afghanistan and are at risk.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The UK continues to work with international partners and continues to hold the Taliban to account for safe passage for those who wish to leave.

The MoD and FCDO are working with our international partners to identify and facilitate safe passages in the region.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[51854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of people allowed to resettle in the UK through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme in the next 12 months.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

The ACRS is in addition to individuals relocated through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). We have relocated over 7,000 eligible Afghan citizens and their family members under the ARAP scheme, which remains open.

The ACRS is a bespoke scheme, which responds to a challenging and complex situation. The capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and difficult decisions have to be made on who will be prioritised for resettlement.

There are around 6,500 people in the UK who have been brought to safety during and after the evacuation and who are eligible for the ACRS under Pathway 1. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as Afghan families of British Nationals.

Under Pathway 2, we anticipate receiving referrals from the UNHCR for up to 2,000 refugees during the first year of this pathway. We will continue to receive UNHCR referrals to the scheme in the coming years. Under Pathway 3, in the first year we will offer resettlement places to up to 1,500 people from the three identified cohorts (British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni) and their eligible family members.

Beyond the first year of Pathway 3, the Government will work with our international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans at risk.

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[51934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan arrivals to the UK were placed in bridging hotels in each month between 1 January and 31 August 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Through Operation Warm Welcome, Afghans resettling in the UK under the ARAP and ACRS will be supported in accessing accommodation and the vital health, education, and support into employment they need to fully integrate into society.

The number of people temporarily residing in hotels changes weekly, as new arrivals enter the UK – some of whom have made their own living arrangements - and as others move into settled accommodation.

At 12 August 2022, 9,667 people were living in temporary hotel accommodation. However, the number of new residents in hotels, broken down by month, is not available in a quality assured and reportable format.

We don't want to see Afghan families in temporary accommodation for any longer than is necessary – and we have been working as fast as possible to support Afghan families into homes of their own, so that they can settle into their local communities, feel safe and independent and rebuild their lives in the UK.

## ■ Sexual Offences

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[51703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what conditions a suspect of serious sexual offences released under investigation can be (a) given post charge bail conditions or (b) remanded.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Individuals who are Released Under Investigation (RUI) cannot have bail conditions set against them. RUI is a non-legislative police process which does not allow police to include conditions as part of a suspect's release.

Before the suspect has been charged, police can use pre-charge bail where it is necessary and proportionate. This may be subject to certain conditions, for example, non-contact with the victim.

If charged, the police can apply post-charge bail. Post-charge police bail is governed by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The courts can also impose post-charge bail under the Bail Act 1976, with conditions if appropriate.

Decisions on whether to remand a suspect are risk-based and include where there are grounds to believe that the suspect will not attend court, may commit another offence or obstruct the course of justice. Suspects will not be remanded unless the strict circumstances apply.

The Government has introduced legislation to reform the bail system to reduce the use of RUI and increase the use of bail. This will help to ensure that bail, including



conditional bail, is used to adequately protect victims. Guidance will be issued by the College of Policing to accompany these changes.

## ■ Sexual Offences: Trials

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**

[\[51704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Department of Justice Answer of 13 September 2022 to Question 47553 on Sexual Offences: Trials, and with reference to The Secretary of State Answer to the Question from the hon. Member for South Shields at Justice Questions on 24 May 2022, Official Report, column 154, how Operation Soteria will help ensure that the focus of investigation is on the accused rather than the victim.

**Mims Davies:**

The Home Office is providing £6.65m to support the Operation Soteria programme, which is developing a new national operating model for the investigation and prosecution of rape. The new model will be made available to all police forces in England and Wales from June 2023.

The investigation of rape must be no different to any other crime, with a focus on the suspect rather than the victim. The new model will support officers to better understand the patterns in behaviour that lead to sexual offending and use this knowledge to guide rape investigations and disrupt offenders.

In addition, the programme has worked with the College of Policing to develop, design and pilot a new learning programme for police officers which will strengthen investigative skills and enhance and embed specialist knowledge about sexual offending and victim engagement.

## ■ Spiking

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[49720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases of spiking of (a) drinks and (b) by injection have been reported to the police in England in each of the last 12 months.

**Mims Davies:**

Reports of spiking, be that via drink or needle, are of course concerning. It is not possible with the data that the Home Office holds to provide a full and accurate picture on the scale of such attacks. The Home Office will publish data on the number of spiking reports as part of the statutory report on the scale and nature spiking. The report will be published in April 2023.

## ■ UK Border Force: Private Education

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[51489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of education fees for dependents of Border Force staff in school years (a) 2009-10,

(b) 2014-15 and (c) 2019-20; and what budget has been allocated for such fees in the 2022-23 school year.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information is not held in the correct format.

#### ■ **UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence**

**John Penrose:**

[\[53338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when UK Visas and Immigration will reply to the correspondence of 25 July and 23 August 2022 from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of constituent Mr Arian Shahrami.

**Tom Pursglove:**

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded 22 September 2022.

#### ■ **Visas: Applications**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[49648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has she made of the potential impact on the employment status of applicants on delays in processing in-time renewals for two and a half year Leave to Remain visas.

**Tom Pursglove:**

If an application for leave to remain is submitted 'in-time' (i.e. while the applicant still has leave to enter or remain), the applicant's entitlements continue while the application is awaiting a decision as afforded by the Immigration Act 1971. This would include the right to work if this was part of the applicant's previous conditions of leave to remain.

#### ■ **Visas: Russia**

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:**

[\[51765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on the suspension of tourist visas for Russian citizens wishing to visit the UK.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Russian nationals are permitted to make UK visa applications as there may still be legitimate reasons why they might seek to come to the UK, such as to visit family members.

We have introduced measures for Russian nationals applying for visas which includes additional and robust checks.

The Nationality and Borders Act (NABA) 2022 also gave the Home Secretary powers to impose visa penalties on any country, including those that pose a risk to international peace and security. We keep this under constant review.

**JUSTICE****■ County Courts: Finance****Sarah Olney:****[51900]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the recommendations in the Sixth Report of the Justice Select Committee, Session 2021–22, Court capacity, published on 27 April 2022, whether his Department is taking steps to implement the recommendations on (a) the transparency of timeliness and (b) providing resources to increase the (i) judicial, (ii) physical, (iii) digital and (iv) staffing capacity of the County Court.

**Sarah Olney:****[51901]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Justice Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2021–22 entitled Court Capacity, HC 69, published on 27 April 2022, whether his Department is taking steps to implement the recommendations on (a) the transparency of timeliness and (b) providing resources to increase the (i) judicial, (ii) physical, (iii) digital and (iv) staffing capacity of (A) Wandsworth County Court, (B) Kingston County Court and (C) other courts in the south west of London.

**Gareth Johnson:**

The Government responded to the Justice Select Committee's report on Court Capacity in July 2022. As set out in the response, the civil courts play a crucial role in ensuring citizens have access to justice and in supporting the economy. We took swift action in response to the pandemic, including introducing Covid-secure courtrooms and remote hearings, and despite the impact of the pandemic our timeliness figures in civil courts remained stable over 2021. However, we are working to improve timeliness, across all tracks for those claims that progress to a hearing.

HMCTS' data strategy, published in December 2021, sets out HMCTS' strategy to gather, hold, curate, and protect the data we need and to open and share data safely to support transparency.

The Government has invested £1.3bn to transform the justice system, introducing 21st Century technology and online services to increase access to justice, improve efficiency and modernise the courts. The digital reforms and simplified services are removing simple cases from court, cutting down unnecessary paperwork and helping some of the most vulnerable people facing difficult situations get justice as quickly as possible. The Government has also legislated to improve the effective running of the civil courts, most recently including the provision of a new Online Procedure Rule Committee in the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022 and launching a consultation on proposals to increase the use of mediation.

To further support the judicial, physical, digital and staffing resource in the County Court, we will maximise the number of sitting days utilised across the jurisdiction, ensuring the administrative and staffing support required for those sitting days is in place, and will continue to deliver efficiencies through our Reform programme. The Spending Review settlement includes a further £324 million over the next three years

to improve timeliness in civil and family courts and tribunals. This funding is being used to meet various costs (including judicial, staffing and legal aid) of providing additional sitting days in these jurisdictions to help recover performance and tackle backlogs following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The three courts in the South West London cluster are Wandsworth County Court, Kingston County and West London Family Court. These courts will benefit from the measures described above, as will other county courts across England and Wales.

#### ■ Enforcement Conduct Board

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[51944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of placing the Enforcement Conduct Board on a statutory footing.

**Gareth Johnson:**

The Ministry of Justice strongly supports the creation of the Enforcement Conduct Board, which will provide independent oversight of debt enforcement firms in order to raise standards and protect vulnerable people in debt.

We have committed to review, within two years of its operation, whether it is necessary to put it on a statutory footing.

#### ■ Human Rights: Reform

**Anne McLaughlin:** [\[51747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reform human rights law in the UK.

**Gareth Johnson:**

The Government is now looking again at the Bill of Rights Bill to ensure that it will deliver our objectives in this area as effectively as possible.

#### ■ Lord Bamford

**Angela Rayner:** [\[49174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he last met Lord Bamford.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The newly appointed Secretary of State has not yet met Lord Bamford in his capacity as Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

#### ■ Ministry of Justice: Accountability

**Sir George Howarth:** [\[49590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has processes in place to enable citizens and their representatives, including hon Members, to arrange in-person meetings with non-Executive Directors in his (a) Department and (b) other agencies and bodies for which he is responsible to raise concerns about (i) the performance, (ii) operational issues and (iii) management and scrutiny of his Department.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department has no specific processes in place for members of the public or MPs to arrange in-person meetings with non-Executive Directors.

**■ Ministry of Justice: Data Protection****Sir George Howarth:****[49586]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to whom do the data protection officers in his (a) Department and (b) departmental agencies and other bodies report to in respect of their data protection duties.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) reports to the Chief Security Officer, who reports to the Chief Operating Officer/Senior Information Risk Owner, who reports to the Permanent Secretary. The DPO together with the Data Protection Team supports the Ministry of Justice, its five Executive Agencies and some of its Arm's Length Bodies.

**Sir George Howarth:****[49587]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that citizens and their representatives, including hon. Members, receive responses to correspondence sent to his Department's data protection officer.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Ministry of Justice has a dedicated mailbox ([dpo@justice.gov.uk](mailto:dpo@justice.gov.uk)) which is widely publicised internally and externally. Anyone can send correspondence via this mailbox which is then reviewed and disseminated to the appropriate person or team for actioning. If correspondence is received via post or other routes, there are processes in place to divert it to Data Protection Officer mailbox.

**Sir George Howarth:****[49588]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has taken steps to help ensure that citizens are able to meet in-person with his Department's data protection officer.

**Rachel Maclean:**

There is no legal obligation for the Data Protection Officer (DPO) to meet citizens in person. There is a requirement for data subjects/citizens to be informed of the DPO's contact details. This is done via the Ministry of Justice's Personal Information Charters and privacy notices.

**Sir George Howarth:****[49589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken through its (a) policies, (b) procedures and (c) designated personnel to ensure that it is able to account for personal data under Article 5(1) of the UK General Protection Regulation.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The MoJ has a data protection policy which is supported by topic specific acceptable use protocols (e.g. Data Sharing, Subject Access Requests, Data Subject Rights).

There also a raft of guidance documents and a comprehensive training programme which is designed around specific roles and business need.

The Ministry of Justice's Data Protection Team comprises certified data protection professionals. This team is supported by Information Assurance Leads and Knowledge and Information Managers who are embedded in business areas and Executive Agencies to provide assurance against data protection legislation. The MoJ's approach to data protection compliance was endorsed by the Information Commissioner's Office when it undertook a consensual audit in October 2021 and awarded the MoJ a "reasonable" rating (the second highest rating).

## ■ Parole

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[49742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many parole board hearings have been rescheduled since January 2021; and how many of those have been rescheduled for a date that was six months or more beyond the original hearing date.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[49743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many re-scheduled parole hearings have taken place after the parole board's own target date for said hearings.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The total number of completed oral hearings concluded between January 2021 – July 2022 (the latest date for which data is available) was 9,911, of which 5,370 were adjourned and 1,695 hearings were deferred.

The Parole Board seeks to conclude all cases in a timely fashion and aims to relist an adjourned or deferred case within three months of that decision. In 2021-22, 94% of parole cases had a hearing date within three months of being ready to list.

In addition, timeliness is measured through the Parole Board's target to maintain cases outstanding at less than 20% of its active caseload. In 2021-22, this target was achieved at 18%.

## ■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[51993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring ministerial approval for the transfer of male-bodied trans prisoners to the female prison estate; and if he will make a statement.

**Rob Butler:**

The safety of all prisoners in our care is our top priority. I am currently reviewing transgender prisoner allocation policy and will come forward with more details once this review has been completed.

**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[51994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's policy is on the placement of trans people in the prison estate; whether the placement of Sally Dixon in HMP Bronzefield is consistent with that policy; and if he will make a statement.

**Rob Butler:**

HM Prison & Probation Service's policy framework 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender' sets out the way in which placement decisions are made for transgender prisoners. Transgender offenders will be held in a prison which matches their legally recognised gender unless a decision has been approved by a Complex Case Board to hold them at another location.

These boards are made up of experts, including a senior prison manager, and make a robust assessment of all known risks both to and from the individual in question. This assessment includes consideration of the individual's offending history and anatomy.

I am currently reviewing transgender prisoner allocation policy and will come forward with more details once this review has been completed.

It would be inappropriate to comment on an individual case.

**■ Wills: Cryptocurrencies****Dan Jarvis:**[\[49668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to digital assets for next of kin where they are not reference in the will of the deceased.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government will consider recommendations made in respect of accessing digital assets after a person has died and inheritance questions for such rights, in the light of two forthcoming law reform reports being undertaken by the Law Commission.

The first of these is the law reform project on digital assets which is exploring how the existing law of personal property applies to digital assets. The Law Commission's consultation paper on this topic was issued in July and runs to 4 November 2022.

The second is the Law Commission's law reform project reviewing the law of wills which will contribute to the evidence base around the transfer of digital assets on death.

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ Council Tax: Homes for Ukraine Scheme****Catherine West:**[\[49747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of allowing people who

receive the single person's Council Tax discount and who sponsor refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to continue receiving that discount beyond the initial 12 month period if they continue hosting Ukrainian refugees.

**Paul Scully:**

Persons arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme are disregarded for the purposes of determining whether a council tax discount is available to the household in which they live. In situations where a person holding a Homes for Ukraine immigration permission lives with a host rent free, who would otherwise live on their own, the host will still be entitled to a 25% single person discount.

■ **First Time Buyers: Greater London**

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[45154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to support first time buyers in London.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government is committed to boosting home ownership. Since 2010, over 800,000 households have been helped to purchase a home through Government-backed schemes including Help to Buy and Right to Buy. In London, 35,906 first time buyers have bought a home with support of the Help to Buy: Equity Loan.

■ **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

**Catherine West:**

[\[49748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support will be available to Ukrainian refugees who arrived in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme after the end of the initial six month period for which sponsors were asked to host.

**Paul Scully:**

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [46219](#) on 21 September 2021.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions**

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

[\[45001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of section 21 notices on the level of rents in the private rented sector.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Government published a consultation in July 2019 "A New Deal for Renting" to understand the impact of any reform to Section 21. 19,697 consultation responses in total were received from a range of individuals and, since then, the Government has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement to understand the issues raised.



## ■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

**Andrew Lewer:** [\[49250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy not to develop any forms of rent control in the private rented sector.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Government does not support the introduction of rent controls in the private rented sector to set the level of rent at the outset of a tenancy. Historical evidence suggests that these would discourage investment in the sector and would lead to declining property standards as a result, which would not help landlords or tenants. Recent international examples also suggest that rent controls can have an inadvertent negative impact on the supply of housing and may encourage more illegal subletting.

## ■ Rented Housing

**Sarah Olney:** [\[45237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) people who illegally sublet accommodation and (b) private landlords who fail to abide by landlord-tenant laws.

**Sarah Olney:** [\[45241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that private landlords abide by landlord-tenant laws.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

We have given local authorities strong powers to ensure private landlords abide by existing legislation. We strengthened these tools through the Housing and Planning Act 2016, by introducing civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution, extending rent repayment orders and introducing banning orders for the most serious and prolific offenders.

The Department is working closely with local authorities to better understand the private rented sector. However, there is currently no data available to estimate the number of people who illegally sublet accommodation or the number of private landlords who fail to abide by existing legislation.

## ■ Shared Ownership: Rents

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[49257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the potential change in rent costs for people with shared ownership rents from April 2023.

**Lee Rowley:**

*[Holding answer 22 September 2022]:* Shared Ownership rents are permitted to increase by a maximum of RPI + 0.5% per year. Given current levels of high inflation,

the Government is aware of the potential for large nominal-terms rent increases for Shared Ownership leaseholders in 2023-24

As RPI + 0.5% is the permitted maximum Shared Ownership rents can increase by, social housing providers have the flexibility to set increases below this level. The Government strongly encourages providers to make use of this flexibility, and we know that many are carefully considering their options in response to cost of living concerns.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[51935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial assistance to people on shared ownership rents in the context of rising interest rates.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government is aware that rising interest rates will increase monthly mortgage payments and rising cost of living will decrease available income. However, all new mortgages since 2014, including those for shared owners, have been subject to rigorous affordability assessment, with interest rate stress test. If shared owners start to miss payments, rules on lender forbearance from 2009 require lenders to work with households to find solutions to avoid repossession and for repossession to be a last resort.

The Government is also aware of the potential for large nominal-terms rent increases for shared owners in 2023-24. Shared Ownership rents are permitted to increase by a maximum of the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 0.5% per year, using the RPI figure for a specified month. As RPI plus 0.5% is the permitted maximum Shared Ownership rents can increase by, social housing providers have the flexibility to set increases below this level. The Government strongly encourages providers to make use of this flexibility, and we know that many are carefully considering their options in response to cost-of-living concerns.

## ■ Sleeping Rough: Employment

**Dan Carden:**

[\[49755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to support people with experience of rough sleeping to gain (a) training or (b) employment; and whether the Department is assessing the potential merits of direct employment schemes.

**Paul Scully:**

This Government is clear that work provides the best opportunity to move out of poverty, and we are determined to do all we can to support those recovering from rough sleeping to stabilise their lives so they can sustain employment.

As part of our Ending Rough Sleeping for Good strategy, we will improve the support available to help people with experience of rough sleeping into employment. Designated homelessness leads will work as part of the teams in jobcentres to offer

tailored support to enable people who have slept rough to access skills and employment support.

The multi-year Rough Sleeping Initiative will include at least £5.5 million of employment and training schemes across 50 councils, aimed at improving access to work for those who have been rough sleeping and are ready to move onto this next phase of recovery.

The Government is also launching an employer covenant with Crisis which will provide guidance and best practice to help businesses and charities match those who have experienced rough sleeping with a wide pool of vacancies.

### ■ **Social Rented Housing: Evictions**

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

[\[44997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of section 21 notices on the housing supply of local authorities.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Tenancies provided directly by Local Authorities are governed by the Housing Act 1985, and Local Authorities are therefore unable to evict tenants using Section 21.

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

[\[44999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of section 21 notices on the availability of social housing.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The July 2019 “A New Deal for Renting” consultation sought views on removing Section 21 in the social rented sector. 19,697 consultation responses in total were received from a range of individuals and, since then, the Government has undertaken extensive stakeholder engagement to understand the issues raised.

### ■ **Social Rented Housing: Waiting Lists**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[46175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to reduce waiting lists for social housing.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

Since 2010, more than 574,000 affordable homes have been delivered, including 154,600 for social rent. A further £11.5 billion of taxpayer subsidy is being made available with £8.6 billion of that already allocated.

Local authorities are best placed to develop solutions which make best use of local social homes. That is why the Government has given local authorities the freedom to manage their own waiting lists and to determine who qualifies for social housing.

**■ Wind Power: Planning Permission****Daisy Cooper:**[\[49788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 26 April 2022 and to Written Statement HCWS294 of 8 September 2022, if he will urgently review the inclusion of footnote 54 on the National Planning Policy Framework regarding the presumption against onshore wind energy development applications.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government has made clear in national planning policy that our planning system should support the transition to a low-carbon future, including supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. We expect that local planning authorities should approve applications for renewable and low carbon energy generation if the impacts of those developments are or can be made acceptable. There is no absolute presumption against onshore wind energy, but the National Planning Policy Framework expects any proposed wind energy development to be located in an area identified as suitable in the local plan, and to demonstrate it has the backing of the community.

We announced in the British Energy Security Strategy that we won't introduce wholesale changes to planning regulations for onshore wind at this stage. However, we committed to develop local partnerships that will enable supportive communities to host new onshore wind infrastructure and enjoy the benefits of doing so. These will seek to enable the deployment of onshore wind in England where there is clear community consent. The detail of these partnerships will be set out in a consultation later this year.

**TRANSPORT****■ Avanti West Coast: Standards****Navendu Mishra:**[\[49796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help restore the full timetable for rail services on the Avanti West Coast franchise.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Department meets regularly with Avanti West Coast to understand the issues and challenge them to restore the timetable as soon as they can do so reliably.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[52058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Schedule 1A (Section 7) of the Emergency Recovery Management Agreement, what steps her Department has taken since 2019 to ensure that Avanti West Coast fulfils its obligations to use all reasonable endeavours to avoid or mitigate the impact of any disruption to the Franchise services and has regard to the potential risk of shortages of appropriately skilled or qualified Franchise Employees.

**Kevin Foster:**

Department officials continue to review and scrutinise Avanti West Coast's (AWC) performance and monitor the overall delivery of the contract for passengers.

Officials meet with AWC to interrogate the issues and challenges, particularly concerning traincrew availability and timetable recovery. Separately, the Department is considering AWC's claim for contractual relief under Force Majeure provisions and what, if any, contractual implications apply.

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[52059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment she has made of Avanti West Coast's franchise performance obligations for the current reporting period.

**Kevin Foster:**

Operator performance is independently evaluated against set criteria and considers all elements within the operator's control.

Independent consideration of Avanti West Coast's performance for the current period will be carried out following the end of the evaluation period on 15 October 2022.

As part of this evaluation, the outcome of the Department's decision (yet to be taken) on AWC's claim for contractual relief under Force Majeure provisions will be a factor.

**■ Avanti West Coast: Timetables****Navendu Mishra:**[\[52060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department approved Avanti West Coast's reduced timetable announced in August and September 2022.

**Kevin Foster:**

An immediate and near total cessation of drivers volunteering to work passenger trains on rest days meant Avanti West Coast (AWC) was unable to resource its timetable. To mitigate the impact of short notice cancellations on passengers, the Department endorsed a temporary reduction from seven to four trains per hour (tph) on 14 August 2022.

**■ Blue Badge Scheme: EU Countries****Luke Pollard:**[\[49780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2022 to Question 47650 on Blue Badge Scheme: EU Countries, what recent progress he has made in his discussions with EU countries on the continued recognition of the UK Blue Badge.

**Kevin Foster:**

Informal discussions continue with several countries.

It would not be appropriate to provide commentary on the progress of ongoing discussions.

**■ Bus Services: Fares****Ian Murray:** [\[49610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the bus fare cap introduced by the Government will have an effect on the Barnett consequential for Scotland.

**Kevin Foster:**

The £2 fare cap announced by the Government on 3 September will apply to single bus tickets on most services in England outside London.

This proposal is being funded from existing Department for Transport budgets and therefore will have no impact on the Barnett consequential for Scotland.

**■ Driving Tests****Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[51460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency began its recruitment of 300 additional driving examiners.

**Katherine Fletcher:**

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can, including recruiting more than 300 driving examiners across Great Britain. The first recovery recruitment campaign was launched on 10 February 2021. Since then, 285 driving examiners have entered testing, of which 20 were in Scottish test centres.

In addition, there are 147 recruits who are in the process of being trained to become driving examiners, of which 18 are for test centres in Scotland.

The DVSA's examiner recruitment campaigns continue to be successful but, like many employers, the DVSA is finding the job market extremely competitive. As it moves through each recruitment campaign, the DVSA will continually review and make changes and improvements to its recruitment and selection process, and training courses.

On 20 September 2022, the DVSA launched its latest campaign to recruit another 136 driving examiner posts; 8 of these posts are intended for test centres in Scotland.

Since the commencement of the recovery recruitment campaigns, waiting times for car practical driving tests have reduced by 1.5 weeks (based on the DVSA's data at the end of August 2022).

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:** [\[51461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's plan to recruit 300 additional driving examiners, how many additional driving instructors been recruited as on 20 September 2022.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[51462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the change in the average waiting time for a driving test has been in the period since the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency began its recruitment of 300 additional driving examiners.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[51463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's plan to recruit 300 additional driving examiners, how many and what proportion of these additional driving instructors were recruited in Scotland as on 20 September 2022.

**Katherine Fletcher:**

Driver testing services were significantly disrupted during the pandemic, which has led to a high demand for learners who are now wanting to take their driving test.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as it can, including recruiting more than 300 driving examiners across Great Britain. The first recovery recruitment campaign was launched on 10 February 2021. Since then, 285 driving examiners have entered testing, of which 20 were in Scottish test centres.

In addition, there are 147 recruits who are in the process of being trained to become driving examiners, of which 18 are for test centres in Scotland.

The DVSA's examiner recruitment campaigns continue to be successful but, like many employers, the DVSA is finding the job market extremely competitive. As it moves through each recruitment campaign, the DVSA will continually review and make changes and improvements to its recruitment and selection process, and training courses.

On 20 September 2022, the DVSA launched its latest campaign to recruit another 136 driving examiner posts; 8 of these posts are intended for test centres in Scotland.

Since the commencement of the recovery recruitment campaigns, waiting times for car practical driving tests have reduced by 1.5 weeks (based on the DVSA's data at the end of August 2022).

## ■ **Electric Scooters: Visual Impairment**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[52018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Guide Dogs report entitled Guide Dogs Scoot Aware, published in May 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications of the findings of that report for her policy on e-scooters; and if she will make a further assessment of the potential impact of e-scooters on people with visual impairments.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Department welcomes this report and officials met with Guide Dogs on 18 August 2022 to discuss its recommendations. The Department will continue to



consider how best to address the impact of e-scooters on other road users, including those with visual impairments, and will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders, including through a public consultation, before any new arrangements come into force.

#### ■ **First Rail Holdings: Company Accounts**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[51965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether she has had recent discussions with First Rail Holdings Ltd on the overdue submission of their latest accounts to Companies House; and if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the financial position of that company.

**Kevin Foster:**

This is a matter for Companies House to take up with First Rail Holdings Ltd.

The Department has financial support arrangements with the ultimate parent company First Group plc (the parent of First Rail Holdings Ltd) so does not foresee the need for any assessment of this issue.

#### ■ **Regional Airports**

**Mr David Davis:** [\[51423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether her Department is taking steps to help keep (a) Doncaster Sheffield Airport and (b) other regional transport hubs open.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government is strongly committed to regional airports. They provide key transport links to our local communities, support thousands of jobs in the regions and act as key gateways to international opportunities.

Transport Ministers recognise the importance of Doncaster Sheffield Airport to the region. We remain committed to a continued aviation future for the airport and continue to engage with and encourage stakeholders to develop a locally led solution to support this outcome.

## TREASURY

#### ■ **Bank Services: Carmarthenshire**

**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[51601\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with the banking hub company on setting up a site in the Upper Tywi Valley in Carmarthenshire.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government has welcomed industry efforts to develop coordinated initiatives to support access to cash. Following the Government's commitment to legislate to protect access to cash, the Cash Action Group announced plans for industry to assess the access to cash needs of communities where there is a closure of a core



cash service or upon the request of a local community. These assessments are undertaken independently by LINK (which operates the UK's largest ATM network) and the provision of shared bank hubs is a commercial decision for industry. Where LINK recommends the introduction of a bank hub, industry has established the Bank Hub company to oversee the rollout of banks hubs across the UK. Further information about the assessment process can be found on LINK's website.

## ■ **Cost of Living: Northern Ireland**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[52064\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has considered to help expediate support to people in Northern Ireland with meeting rising (a) energy costs, (b) food costs and (c) living expenses in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive.

**Chris Philp:**

The UK Government has taken decisive action to support the people of Northern Ireland with the cost of living.

The government is providing significant support to help people in Northern Ireland with rising energy costs through the Northern Ireland Energy Price Guarantee, which will offer households the equivalent level of gas and electricity bills support as the scheme for Great Britain.

Households in Northern Ireland will also benefit from the cost of living support already announced for this financial year. This includes a £400 discount on bills through the Northern Ireland Energy Bills Support Scheme, the same as that available to households in Great Britain.

The one-off Cost of Living Payments announced in May will also be delivered UK-wide, and includes £650 for those on means-tested benefits, £300 for pensioners, and £150 for those with a disability.

More broadly, our economic plan will be pro-growth. The Chancellor has today set out a package of measures to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut taxes and boost growth. Productivity growth is the only way to deliver sustainable improvements in living standards across the United Kingdom.

## ■ **Debts: Cost of Living**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[52065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with (a) banks and (b) other financial institutions on ensuring that people struggling with the cost of living and rising bills do not face financial penalties on overdrafts and mortgages if they default during the cost of living crisis.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Treasury Ministers meet regularly with banks and other financial institutions to discuss their general lending and retail banking practices. These financial institutions stand ready to support consumers in the current economic climate. For those

struggling to keep up with their mortgage payments or pay back their overdrafts in light of the rising cost of living, it is important they make early contact with their mortgage lender or overdraft provider.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has guidance that requires firms to offer tailored forbearance options to mortgage borrowers and overdraft users that are in financial difficulty. For mortgage borrowers, this could include measures such as a payment holiday, partial payment, or an extension of mortgage term. For overdraft users, the FCA set rules for banks and building societies. These include mandating that they cannot charge more for unarranged overdrafts than arranged overdrafts, banning fixed daily and monthly charges, and measures to improve the transparency of pricing. In instances where an overdraft provider identifies that a customer has a pattern of repeat overdraft use and may see increased fees on their borrowing, the rules also require firms to develop strategies to reduce harm to customers.

### ■ Financial Conduct Authority: Liability

**Patrick Grady:** [\[49703\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the Financial Conduct Authority's exemption from civil liability.

**Patrick Grady:** [\[49704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that the Financial Conduct Authority has a (a) robust complaints process and (b) appropriate compensation scheme for cases of regulatory failure.

**Patrick Grady:** [\[49705\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making the findings of the Financial Regulators Complaints Commissioner binding as opposed to advisory.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is an operationally independent non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. The FCA has statutory immunity from claims for damages under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. The Government believes this is important in allowing the FCA to take a robust approach to regulation and to focus its resources on pursuing its objectives without the distraction of claims that may frustrate these efforts, or the risk that firms can delay supervisory interventions through vexatious litigation. The FCA's ability to act robustly is important to millions of consumers across the country.

Given this statutory immunity, it is vital that those directly affected by the FCA's actions have an avenue to have matters put right where the FCA has failed in carrying out its role. The Financial Services Act 2012 requires that the FCA establishes a complaints scheme and appoints, with the Treasury's approval, an independent person (the Complaints Commissioner) who can investigate complaints.

The complaints scheme is an informal mechanism for investigating complaints and ensuring that there is transparency around the way the FCA operates whilst not undermining the principle of the FCA's statutory immunity. The activities of the Complaints Commissioner are governed by the framework set out in legislation and in the regulators' Complaints Scheme. The Complaints Commissioner has powers to recommend the payment of compensation by the FCA and to require the FCA to publish its response to any recommendation that the Complaints Commissioner makes. The Complaints Commissioner does not have powers to compel the FCA to pay compensation. It is not a court, nor is there a right of appeal for the FCA if the investigator makes an adverse finding against it. The FCA remains solely accountable for the decisions it makes over how to use its funds.

The FCA is a self-financing organisation funded via a levy on financial services firms, which is set by the FCA to cover its funding requirement each year following consultation. The Government has no role in the FCA's budgeting or the setting of the levy. The FCA, like other public authorities, has the ability to make compensation payments on a voluntary ('ex gratia') basis. The FCA publishes their approach to these payments as part of the information on their complaints scheme.

## ■ Financial Services: Standards

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[49706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing on financial services firms a general duty of care towards their consumers.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that consumers of financial services are appropriately protected whilst preserving the competitiveness of the UK financial services sector.

The Financial Services Act 2021 required the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to consult on whether it should make rules giving regulated financial service providers a duty of care over their customers. This was in response to concerns from Parliamentarians, who wanted to reduce levels of consumer harm in financial services.

Following extensive engagement with stakeholders, the FCA published a final Policy Statement on 27 July 2022 on its new Consumer Duty. The Consumer Duty will clarify and raise expectations for the standard of care that should be provided by financial services firms to consumers, and ensure consumers benefit from a higher level of care from financial services firms.

The FCA, as an operationally independent regulator, is responsible for implementing and enforcing its Consumer Duty rules. It would not be appropriate for the government to comment on the specific rules introduced by the FCA.

**■ Financial Services: Visual Impairment****Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[49696\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential challenges for blind and partially sighted people of (a) accessing and (b) managing their finances independently; and if his Department will take steps to help tackle these challenges.

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[49697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an estimate of the number and proportion of blind and partially sighted people who have faced digital exclusion with online banking in the latest period for which data is available; and whether his Department will take steps to help support people facing digital exclusion with online banking.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government does not make direct assessments of visually impaired consumers' ability to access banking. However, The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) conducts a Financial Lives Survey, which provides a comprehensive insight into the finances of the adult UK population. The latest survey closed in June 2022 and its findings will be published in due course, and will include insights on the use and satisfaction levels of visually impaired consumers with mobile and online banking services.

Innovations in the market mean that banking in the UK is more accessible than ever before, with many firms offering services to make everyday banking easier for the visually impaired such as communications in Braille, talking ATMs, accessible cards and text relay services for online banking. Firms also have staff on hand in branches to help customers set-up online or mobile banking services, teach them how to use video banking services and, for those without access to digital devices, the sector has established initiatives to support customers by providing them with free tablet devices.

The FCA has also published guidance for firms on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers, which includes physical disabilities such as blindness and visual impairment. The guidance explores, among other things, how firms can understand the needs of vulnerable customers and provide targeted services for this cohort. For the visually impaired, the FCA expects firms to offer appropriate modes of communication such as using Braille or audio. It also expects firms to take into account the needs of these customers when designing, developing and testing products and services.

In addition, like all service providers, banks and building societies are bound under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments, where necessary, in the way they deliver their services.

## ■ Funerals: VAT

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[51458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making costs associated with the organisation of remembrance services exempt from VAT.

**Richard Fuller:**

VAT has been designed as a broad-based tax on consumption, and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to the vast majority of goods and services.

It would be administratively challenging for suppliers to identify and apply a different VAT treatment to supplies based on the type of event and for HMRC to ensure that the VAT treatment and VAT accounting is applied correctly throughout the supply chain. Businesses and organisations in the supply chain are normally able to recover VAT on costs. However, they are unable to recover the VAT on costs used in making exempt or out of scope supplies.

The Government keeps all taxes under review and welcomes representations to help inform future decisions on tax policy, as part of the tax policy making cycle and Budget process.

## ■ NHS: Workplace Pensions

**Ian Murray:**

[\[51604\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential impact of annual pension allowance limits on levels of recruitment and retention of NHS staff.

**Ian Murray:**

[\[51605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effect of the increase in the rate of inflation on (a) NHS Scotland pensions and (b) the annual pension allowance limits.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The NHS pension scheme protects pensions in payment by increasing them by CPI and revalues accrued career average pension benefits by CPI+1.5% each year.

The Government is committed to ensuring that hard-working NHS staff do not find themselves reducing their work commitments due to the interaction between their pay, their pension, and the relevant tax regime. On 22 September, the Government announced it will change elements of the NHS Pension Scheme to help retain doctors, nurses and other senior NHS staff, to increase capacity. These changes include:

- Changing pension rules regarding inflation
- Encouraging NHS Trusts to explore local solutions for senior clinicians affected by pension tax charges, such as pension recycling

- Implementing permanent retirement flexibilities and extend existing temporary measures to allow our most experienced staff to return to service or stay in service longer.

It should be noted that NHS workforce planning in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

## ■ Office for Budget Responsibility

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[51692\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ask the Office for Budget Responsibility to prepare an updated fiscal forecast to reflect the Government's (a) energy price cap and (b) taxation policies.

**Chris Philp:**

The Chancellor announced in his statement to the House on Friday 23 September that he will commission the OBR to produce a forecast to be published by the end of this calendar year. We are committed to maintaining the usual two forecasts in this fiscal year, as is required.

## ■ Public Sector: Guaranteed Minimum Pensions

**Dave Doogan:** [\[51970\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department provided written instructions to public service pension schemes on continued payment of Pension Increase (PI) for Guaranteed Minimum Pension in circumstances where there is no monetary payment made through the State Pension between 2016 and 2019.

**Chris Philp:**

Provisions for the indexation of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions by Public Service Pension Schemes, including for the period from 2016 to 2019, are set out in Directions made by HM Treasury under section 59A of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975. These provide for the full indexation of Guaranteed Minimum Pensions earned as part of a public service pension in circumstances where those Guaranteed Minimum Pensions are not increased through the State Pension. The latest Section 59A direction is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975793/Treasury\\_Direction\\_30.03.2021\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975793/Treasury_Direction_30.03.2021_FINAL.pdf)

## ■ Royal Mint: Non-fungible Tokens

**Kevin Brennan:** [\[51454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's announcement entitled Government sets out plan to make UK a global cryptoasset

technology hub, published on 4 April 2022, what recent progress his Department has made on working with the Royal Mint to create a non-fungible token.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The government can confirm that discussions with the Royal Mint on the creation of a non-fungible token are ongoing.

■ **Small Businesses: Northern Ireland**

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[52066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that small and medium businesses in Northern Ireland are able to access immediate financial support to help meet rising costs in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive.

**Chris Philp:**

We recognise the challenge that businesses are facing from rising costs across the UK, including those in Northern Ireland.

We're acting fast to provide vital support to businesses and provide the certainty they need to plan for the challenges ahead this Winter.

On Wednesday, we announced details of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to protect businesses from the spiralling costs of energy by providing a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices over the next six months.

- A parallel scheme, based on the same criteria and providing comparable support, but recognising the different market fundamentals, will be established in Northern Ireland

Further support is available to businesses in Northern Ireland through the Recovery Loan Scheme, a vital scheme offering government-backed loans to small businesses.

- The scheme has already supported more than 300 businesses in Northern Ireland and we recently extended it for another two years.

This builds on the support we have made available to ensure small businesses can access the finance they need throughout the UK.

- At the last Spending Review the government provided over £1.6bn additional funding to the British Business Bank to set up new national and regional funds, including £70m specifically earmarked for Northern Ireland.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Women and Equalities: Ministerial Responsibility**

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[\[49246\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what his responsibilities are; and when he plans to populate the responsibilities section of the Minister for Equalities webpage on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) which appeared blank when that page was accessed on 7 September 2022.



**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The equalities brief has not changed and Ministers and officials will continue to be focused on women and equalities issues as before. Gov.uk pages will be updated in due course.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Bereavement Support Payment: Cohabitation**

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[49675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the surviving partner of cohabitating couples with children are informed of upcoming changes to the eligibility for Bereavement Support Payments.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working to lay before Parliament the draft Remedial Order extending Bereavement Support Payment and Widowed Parent's Allowance to surviving cohabitantes with dependent children. Should the Order be approved, we plan to use a variety of approaches to raise awareness of this change, including updating GOV.UK and working with external stakeholders to ensure maximum reach.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[49676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for Bereavement Support Payments have been denied because the surviving partner was not married or in a civil partnership with the deceased partner, since 2018.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Monthly official statistics for Bereavement Support Payment, including number of decisions disallowed due to not married/ civil partnership and no proof of marriage/civil partnership, between April 2017 and March 2022, 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>

**■ Children: Maintenance**

**Damien Moore:** [\[49768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that paying parents are paying a fair and balanced amount of Child Maintenance in light of the rising cost of living.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The child maintenance calculation was designed to be fair for the paying parent, while ensuring they contribute a significant proportion of their income to support their children.



The calculation represents an amount of money that is broadly similar with the amount that a non-resident parent would spend on supporting the child if they were still living with them.

#### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: EU Law

**Stewart Hosie:** [\[45646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many officials in their Department are working on Retained EU Law legislation.

**Victoria Prentis:**

No additional full time staffing resource has been required to work on retained EU law legislation. At present, approximately ten DWP officials are working on the retained EU law belonging to DWP in much the same way as they would be reviewing and amending other DWP owned legislation. This work is in addition to their other duties.

#### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[47642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has spent on staffing costs for (a) mandatory reconsideration and (b) appeals against Work Capability Assessment decisions for Universal Credit in each year since 2012-13.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Universal Credit cost data cannot be broken down into specific case types (i.e. Work Capability Assessment) so total costs from all UC Reconsiderations and Appeals has been provided.

The information for the financial years covered by the request are detailed in the tables below:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
UNIVERSAL CREDIT	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)	(£M)
Mandatory Reconsiderations	£0.0	£0.0	£0.2	£0.8	£1.1	£4.1	£4.4	£9.3	£11.5	£14.1
Appeals	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	£0.1	£0.2	£1.1	£1.7	£5.7	£5.6	£5.4

Cost figures are rounded to the nearest £0.1m

Data Source: ABM

The cost figures quoted are estimated DWP level 1 operating costs, including both direct delivery staff and non-staff costs. Non-staff costs are only those costs incurred in local cost centres, relating to direct delivery staff.

Please note that the data supplied is from the Departmental Activity Based Models. This data is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected

for internal Departmental use only, and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official

Statistics publication standards. It should therefore be treated with caution. The Departmental Activity Based staffing models are a snapshot of how many people were identified as undertaking specified activities as assigned by line managers.

## ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Termination of Employment

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[46100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many members of staff have left her Department since 12 December 2019.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Between 13 December 2019 and 30 August 2022 (inclusive) 24,415 headcount (21,833.44 FTE) left the Department for Work and Pensions.

## ■ Employment: Terminal Illnesses

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

[\[49560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the financial (a) impact upon and (b) assistance available to people of working age forced to leave their jobs following a diagnosis of terminal illness; and if she will make it her policy to enable such people to have early access to their state pension.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government wants to do all it can to alleviate the pressures on those nearing the end of their lives, and on their families. The main way that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does this is through special benefit rules, sometimes referred to as "the Special Rules". These enable people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to certain benefits, without needing to attend a medical assessment, serve waiting periods and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit. For many years, the Special Rules have applied to people who have 6 months or less to live and now they are being changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live. Once the change has been fully rolled out across all benefits, each year, between 30,000 and 60,000 people may benefit from these changes to the Special Rules. This will mean that the Government is spending approximately £115 million a year more on people who are nearing the end of their lives.

There are 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.

## ■ Jobcentres: Disability

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[48250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether work coaches receive any specific training in how to support disabled jobseekers.

**Victoria Prentis:**

DWP Work Coaches undergo comprehensive ongoing learning to support customers with additional or complex needs, which continues at point of need throughout their role. The learning provides work coaches with the knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- treat each claimant as an individual
- support them with their health condition and the impacts of their condition
- help overcome any barriers and
- support them into moving closer to the working environment.

Their technical learning enables the work coach to determine what is required and never assume to know. They complete scenario-based discussions and skills practice to cultivate effective communication skills including the sensitive use of questions, to reach joint decisions.

DWP also provides the work coach with an understanding of assisted digital, and how they can effectively coach claimants who find using digital services a challenge and are signposted to tools, guidance support and websites to effectively use resources from both internal and external sites. This ensures that they access the most up to date advice and expertise on a particular health condition.

Within DWP, there are also staff who undertake the Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) role. Staff who undertake this role are expected to have completed the Work Coach Learning Journey prior to commencing specific learning for the DEA role which provides them with further skills to:

- analyse communication and adapt communication to claimant needs
- identify appropriate etiquette for claimant meetings based on individual needs
- encourage claimants to think about employment and the challenges they face, working with them to find solutions enabling claimants to progress towards work.

There is also a new product Accessibility Fundamentals learning which helps work coaches and Disability Employment Advisors to understand the various features in Microsoft that can be used to make opportunities more accessible.

**■ Jobcentres: Telephone Services****Daisy Cooper:** [\[48496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) average and (b) longest waiting times for calls to be connected to each JobCentre Plus office in the UK were in each month in each of the last three years.

**Victoria Prentis:**

As our telephony system operates as a virtual network with calls routed to service centres, information on calls to individual Jobcentre Plus offices is not available.

**■ Maternity Pay: Inflation****Stella Creasy:** [\[49645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Statutory Maternity Pay rates in light of current levels of inflation.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The standard rate of SMP is reviewed annually, alongside state benefits, and is generally increased in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). From April 2022 the standard rate of SMP increased to £156.66, in line with the September 2021 CPI rate of 3.1%.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Mr John Baron:** [\[45256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 19 May, 23 June and 14 July 2022 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay regarding the CMS, reference JB32918.

**Victoria Prentis:**

A DWP Complaint Resolution Manager provided a full response to Mr John Baron MP's correspondence on 4 August 2022. A copy of this has been reissued via email on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**■ Work Capability Assessment****Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[49674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what (a) qualifications and (b) training courses are required to be undertaken to become an Assessor for Work Capability Assessments.

**Victoria Prentis:**

All Healthcare Professionals (HCP) must have the following qualifications and experience:

- they are an Occupational Therapist, Nurse (level 1), Physiotherapist or Doctor

- they are fully registered with the relevant regulatory body (doctors must have a licence to practice)
- the licensing body has not placed restrictions on the healthcare professional's registration (unless they relate to disability), in individual cases this may be waived subject to agreement with the department
- they have at least 1 years' post full registration experience (General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council or European Economic Area equivalent) or for non-European Union graduates 1 years' post full registration experience unless otherwise agreed on an individual basis by the department.

HCPs undergo training in Disability Assessment Medicine which includes three distinct areas:

- Generic training - principles of disability analysis, professional standards (including manner and behaviour) and multi-cultural awareness
- Training to undertake benefit-specific assessments - modular training with competency testing at each stage and an approval process
- Scrutiny / file work training - providing advice to the decision maker, theory, and casework exercises, followed by supported individual casework.

The training also includes theory training in a classroom setting, supervised practical training, and a demonstration of understanding as assessed by quality audit.

Before HCPs can carry out assessments, they must go through a formal approval process to ensure they meet the department's requirements in relation to experience, skills, and competence. Failure to demonstrate that they have reached the necessary standards, or to co-operate with feedback and/or retraining, will result in approval being refused.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### ■ 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.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 September 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**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 about 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 (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon highlighted our concern about the detention of Bishop Rolando Álvarez during his visit to the Holy See on 26 August.**

~~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.~~

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

#### ■ UN General Assembly update

##### **Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):**

[\[HCWS302\]](#)

The Prime Minister led the UK delegation to the High Level segment of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA77) which took place in New York between 19 and 26 September.

The delegation travelled to UNGA immediately after attending the State Funeral for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The UN and its member states joined the global expressions of grief and respect following the death of Her Late Majesty, with UN Secretary-General Guterres leading the tributes. Her Late Majesty had a long relationship with the UN, from the founding meetings in London in 1946 through to her visit in 2010 when she remarked that the UN had become “a real force for common good”.

The Foreign Secretary represented the UK at the UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine, attended a separate event on strengthening co-operation on accountability for atrocities committed in the conflict, and spoke at the launch of the First Lady of Ukraine’s foundation. The Foreign Secretary hosted a UK-Gulf Cooperation Council Ministerial and attended the Secretary-General’s Global Crisis Response Group meeting, as well as meetings focused on global food security and the Indo-Pacific.

He met counterparts from Australia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and the United States. Ministers Ford, Ahmad and Goldsmith participated in a wide range of events focused on international development, education, the environment, Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict and various regional issues, and met a number of counterparts.

These events supported the Prime Minister’s and the wider delegation’s programmes – including a range of bilateral meetings and roundtables with business leaders in New York. The delegation engaged with Presidents Biden and Macron, as well as Prime Minister Jugnauth of Mauritius, Prime Minister Kishida of Japan, Prime Minister Lapid of Israel, President Nauseda of Lithuania, President Erdogan of Turkey and President Von der Leyen of the European Commission.

To mark the UK’s support for our Ukrainian allies, the Prime Minister joined the Ukrainian First Lady and the Ukrainian Prime Minister at an exhibition on accountability for international crimes committed in Ukraine, maintaining the international spotlight on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. She also set out to the UN General Assembly how the UK would use its network of partnerships across the globe, such as the Commonwealth and organisations like the G7, to strengthen the principles of sovereignty and self-determination, and to promote freedom and democracy in all parts of the world.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Trade Negotiations Update

**Secretary of State For International Trade (Kemi Badenoch):** [\[HCWS304\]](#)

The first round of United Kingdom-Israel Free Trade Agreement negotiations took place between 12 and 20 September.

In parallel, the third round of United Kingdom-Canada Free Trade Agreement negotiations commenced on 12 September and concluded on 16 September.

Following the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, these rounds proceeded, with appropriate adjustments.

The round of negotiations with Israel was conducted in a hybrid fashion; a small group of United Kingdom officials travelled to Jerusalem for in-person discussions, with further officials attending virtually from the United Kingdom. During this initial round, talks focused on gathering insights on key interests and priorities across policy areas as well as building a shared understanding of each other's initial positions. Technical discussions focused on 29 policy areas in over 50 sessions.

A new agreement with Israel – with services and innovation at its heart - will build upon our existing Trade and Partnership Agreement. It will cement our relationship with a rapidly growing economy and take our trading relationship to the next level. It will support United Kingdom jobs, and update outdated trade rules, unleashing our high-tech innovative economies.

The negotiations with Canada were conducted in a fully virtual format. Technical discussions were held across 26 policy areas across over 50 separate sessions.

Talks focused on reaffirming the United Kingdom's positions, having tabled and presented text across the majority of chapters in the previous round. The United Kingdom's negotiating team made progress on understanding areas of policy convergence and divergence with Canada. They agreed text where possible and in the United Kingdom's interests and objectives to support economic growth.

The negotiations continue to reflect a shared ambition to secure a progressive deal which looks to build on the United Kingdom-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement, and strengthens our existing trading relationship, already worth over £21 billion in 2021.

We are clear that any deals we sign will be in the best interests of the British people and the United Kingdom economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental and labour protections, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations, the NHS and the services it provides is not on the table.

We are working towards holding a second and fourth round of negotiations with Israel and Canada respectively in due course.

Parliament will be kept updated as these negotiations progress.



## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Cabinet Committees

**Prime Minister (Elizabeth Truss):**

[\[HCWS305\]](#)

Today I am publishing an updated Cabinet Committee list. I have placed a copy of the new list in the Libraries of both Houses.

## TREASURY

### ■ Tax exemptions for compensation payments paid by the Post Office for Overturned Historical Convictions

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Richard Fuller):**

[\[HCWS303\]](#)

This House is aware that the Post Office Horizon scandal has had a devastating impact on the lives of many postmasters since it began over 20 years ago. The Government previously announced funding for final settlement compensation payments for postmasters who have had their convictions overturned. So far, the vast majority of postmasters who have had their convictions quashed have each received an interim compensation payment of up to £100,000. The Post Office, supported by Government, is now working towards agreeing final settlements with the claimants who have come forward.

The Government wants to see these postmasters with quashed convictions compensated fairly and swiftly. That is why the Government is announcing today that victims will pay no income tax, capital gains tax, National Insurance contributions, inheritance tax or VAT on compensation payments for Overturned Historical Convictions, including on payments already made. The Government will legislate to exempt these payments in due course where necessary.

HM Revenue and Customs will not collect any tax that may have been due on payments made already up to the date the legislation takes overriding effect.

With the Government being the sole share shareholder in the Post Office, we will continue to work across Government and with the Post Office to ensure the postmasters get the full compensation they deserve.