

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:53 P.M., 21 November 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

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Agency Workers: Pay

**Angela Rayner:**

**[84888]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Good Work Plan published in December 2018, whether it remains his policy to ban the use of pay-between-assignment contracts to avoid agency workers' equal pay rights.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Under regulations 10 and 11 of the Agency Workers Regulations 2010, agency workers were able to waive their right to the same pay as a directly recruited member of staff if they signed a "pay between assignments" contract, also known as a "Swedish Derogation" contract. After a public consultation, the Government decided to revoke regulations 10 and 11 to ban the use of "Swedish Derogation" contracts. The ban came into force on 6 April 2020 and applies to England, Scotland and Wales. The legislation is available online here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/724/contents/made>.

#### ■ Business: Cost of Living

**Bill Esterson:**

**[87825]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with businesses in Sefton Central constituency on the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on those businesses.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses of all sizes and is engaging with a range of businesses to understand these challenges as well as exploring ways to mitigate them. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme is available to all eligible non-domestic energy customers, including businesses, charities and the public sector and will provide a discount on the wholesale costs of gas and electricity.

The Government has also reversed the National Insurance rise, which will save SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, cut fuel duty for 12 months and brought in the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

At the Autumn Statement, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.



## ■ Conditions of Employment

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[84886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 24 October 2022 to Question 63241 on Conditions of Employment, what progress his Department has made on establishing a right to request a more predictable contract after 26 weeks of employment.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government laid out its commitment to establishing a right to request a more predictable contract after 26 weeks of employment in the 2019 Conservative Manifesto. We will bring forward legislation on this if parliamentary time allows.

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[84891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government response to the Taylor review of modern working practices, published on 7 February 2018, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to improve the clarity of employment status.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

On 26 July 2022, the Government responded to its employment status consultation which explored a wide range of employment status legislative proposals.

The response concluded that while the Government recognised the boundaries between the different statuses can be unclear for some individuals and employers, the benefits of a fundamental overhaul of the employment status system were outweighed by the potential disruption associated with legislative reform.

Alongside the Government response, the Government published guidance to help clarify the existing employment status boundaries, making it easier for business to comply with existing regulations and for individuals to understand which employment protections apply to them.

## ■ Construction: Economic Situation

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[88948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the adequacy of the investment environment in the construction sector.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Investing in high quality infrastructure is crucial for boosting economic growth and productivity. The Autumn Statement re-affirmed the Government's commitment to protecting capital investment budgets, meaning government will invest over £600 billion across the next five years, including in the HS2 link to Manchester, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Sizewell C. The Government will also accelerate delivery of infrastructure projects, including through reforms to the planning system, and place the UK Infrastructure Bank on a statutory footing. These measures will ensure businesses have the confidence to invest.

## ■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

**Carol Monaghan:** [\[88914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his Department's policy to provide sole traders with the same loan guarantees as limited businesses under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) closed for new applications on 31 May 2022 and saw 97,846 loans approved worth £25.86 billion. The scheme was open to sole traders, provided they satisfied the scheme's eligibility criteria.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:** [\[84834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Civil Service headcount for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 1 February 2020 and 31 October 2022\* was:

31 October 2022: 5876

1 February 2020: 4577

*\*Date changed to 31 October 2022 as per our latest monthly Official Statistics publication.*

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Huddersfield

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[84810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has held discussions with Kirklees council in the last 12 months on increasing the number of electrical vehicle public charging points in Huddersfield.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

In June, my Rt. Hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport wrote to local authorities, including Kirklees Council, encouraging engagement with the upcoming Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, and the existing On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme. The On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme is currently open for applications.

Officials from the Department for Transport subsequently met with Kirklees Council to discuss LEVI, which will provide councils in England with resource and capital funding to plan and deliver local charging infrastructure.

## ■ EU Law

**Justin Madders:**

[\[88912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 7 November 2022 to Question 72238 on Brexit, what the special legal status of retained EU law is that he refers to in his Answer.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Retained EU Law, as introduced into UK law through the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (EUWA), is subject to complex glosses associated with EU legal principles, which confer a special status on retained EU law. This includes the principle of supremacy, which continues to apply in domestic law, and means some retained EU law takes priority over ordinary domestic law, including Acts of Parliament, in the event of conflict. This is no longer appropriate given we have left the EU.

## ■ Fireworks: Regulation

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[85026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to review the adequacy of fireworks legislation.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government endorses the considerate use of fireworks and action taken to reduce the risks and disturbances to individuals, animals and property. The majority of individuals who use fireworks do so in a responsible and safe manner and there are enforcement mechanisms in place to tackle situations when fireworks are misused. The Government has no current plans to legislate further but continues to monitor the situation.

## ■ Flexible Working: Parents

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[84998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help support working parents with flexible working options that can help increase their workplace participation.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

All employees with 26 weeks' continuous service with their employer already have the right to request flexible working.

In 2021, the government consulted on measures that would further support the uptake of flexible working arrangements, including whether to extend the right to request flexible working to employees from their first day of employment. The consultation is now closed, having received over 1,600 responses. We will respond in due course.

The Government is also pleased to be supporting the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill introduced by the Hon. Member for Bolton South East, which passed Second Reading on 28 October.

### ■ Media: Copyright

**Andy Carter:** [\[82464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential financial impact of extending the copyright exception for text and data mining on news media publishers.

**George Freeman:**

The Government sought evidence of impact on the creative industries in its consultation on AI and IP. The Government has welcomed further evidence from rights holders on financial impact over the Summer. In light of this, the Government will soon launch a period of stakeholder engagement to consider the best way to implement the policy. An impact assessment will be published alongside the legislation when laid.

### ■ New Businesses: Scotland

**Owen Thompson:** [\[88949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the factors that have contributed to the trend in the level of business start-ups in Scotland since 2016.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Many factors influence the business start-up rate, for instance the ease of setting up a business, the availability of finance and the provision of business support. The level of business start-ups in Scotland has been broadly stable over the past five years, with the exception of 2020 where business activity was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The UK business start-up rate is one of the highest in the OECD, reflecting the UK's position as one of the best countries in the world in which to start a business.

#### ***UK and Scotland births of business enterprises 2016-2021 [1]***

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK	397,540	356,895	348,630	363,825	333,020	363,995
Scotland	21,440	19,845	19,620	20,680	16,850	18,910
Scotland % of UK	5.4%	5.6%	5.6%	5.7%	5.1%	5.2%

[1] ONS, *Business Demography, UK, November 2022*

## ■ Parental Leave: Fathers

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[84999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help make it easier for fathers to take statutory parental leave.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

## ■ Paternity Leave: Fathers

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[84889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on making it easier for fathers to take paternity leave since 25 October 2022.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

## ■ Public Houses

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[84882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) provide support to local businesses and (b) find opportunities to reopen closed pubs.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

This Department is working with the Hospitality Sector Council to deliver on our 2021 Hospitality Strategy to improve the resilience of hospitality businesses.

The Government recognise that businesses on the high street, including those in hospitality, are facing cost pressures driven by global factors, including high energy and cost of living pressures.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme ensures that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced in his Autumn Statement that the Government will be taking steps to help rate payers with a package worth £13.6 billion in total.

### ■ **Small Businesses: Cost of Living**

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[88832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many SMEs in East Yorkshire constituency have received Government financial support during the cost of living crisis.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Businesses in East Yorkshire will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, which will save SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, cut fuel duty for 12 months and brought in the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, to protect small businesses from high energy costs over the winter. In addition, the Recovery Loan Scheme is available to SMEs across the UK. The government is also providing financial support for business through the Start Up loan scheme - 179 SMEs in East Yorkshire have received loans to the value of £1,629,934 as of October 2022.

### ■ **Unpaid Work**

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[84887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains his Department's policy to ban unpaid internships.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Current legislation is clear that an individual's entitlement to the minimum wage depends on whether they are a "worker" for minimum wage purposes. Most internships are already highly likely to constitute work and entitle the individual to be paid at least the minimum wage from the first day of employment.

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

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ **Cabinet Office: Bullying and Harassment**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[80858\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps he has taken to help tackle bullying and harassment in his Department.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Cabinet Office does not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form. There are robust policies and processes in place to create a safe working environment and the Department actively encourages staff to report any inappropriate behaviour including bullying, harassment and discrimination.

In October 2021, the Cabinet Office launched an independent [Review into Respect & Inclusion](#) to consider policies, practices and workplace culture in regard to fairness and inclusion in the Cabinet Office. The Department has accepted the independent report's recommendations and are implementing them in full, prioritising actions that will have the greatest immediate impact.

Cabinet Office also have a Fair Treatment Confidants Network where staff are trained to support and signpost their colleagues if they have experienced, witnessed or been accused of bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Additionally, Speak Up Week this November is a twice-yearly campaign consisting of a variety of upskilling events, blogs and resources focusing on encouraging staff to speak up against unfair behaviour in the workplace.

## ■ Cabinet Office: Public Appointments

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[89831\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the public appointments that have been made by his Department since 25 October 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Since 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022, one public appointment has been made by Cabinet Office as the sponsoring department:

- Phillipa Herd was appointed an interim member of the Senior Salaries Review Body. The appointment was announced publicly on 10 November 2022.

## ■ Employment

**John Cryer:**

[\[84797\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what percentage of (a) male and (b) female workers were in the same job as 12 months earlier in each (i) region and (ii) country of the UK in each year since 2010.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 11 November is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Response [UKSA\_Response\_to\_PQ84797.pdf]
2. Table [PQ84797\_Table1.xlsx]

## ■ Landmark Information Group: Contracts

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[80660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 20 October 2022 to Question 63982 on Landmark Information Group: Contracts, for what reason he listed twelve requirements in that answer when the answer also said that the Statement of Requirements shall not be published on security grounds.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The “Statement of Requirements for Points of Interest Data for the National Situation Centre” is an internal procurement document, a section of which details the National Situation Centre’s requirements for Points of Interest Data. This section (the 12 requirements) are not exempt from publication on Security Grounds, whereas the full Statement of Requirements is.

This procurement activity relates to The National Situation Centre, which is exempt from publishing Commercially Sensitive documents under National Security Exemptions. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Sections 23 (Security Bodies) and 24 (National Security) apply. Under Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Section 15 (National Security) applies.

■ **Overseas Trade: The Gambia****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[77323\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the level of trade was with the Gambia in the latest period for which data is available.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

A response to the Hon. Member’s Parliamentary Question of 2 November is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Gambia Trade [UKSA\_Response\_to\_PQ77323.pdf]

**CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ **Church of England: Bishops****Mr Ben Bradshaw:**[\[75759\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how many provincial episcopal visitors there were in the Church of England in each of the last 10 years.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Church of England has three provincial episcopal visitors, the Bishops of Richborough, Ebbsfleet and Beverley. These posts have been held by the following individuals in the last ten years:

YEAR	RICHBOROUGH	EBBSFLEET	BEVERLEY
2012	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Baker	Rt Revd Martyn Jarrett (retired 01.10.12)
2013	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Baker (translated 13.2.13) /Jonathan	Rt Revd Glyn Webster (consecrated 25.01.13)



<b>YEAR</b>	<b>RICHBOROUGH</b>	<b>EBBSFLEET</b>	<b>BEVERLEY</b>
		Goodall (consecrated 25.9.13)	
2014	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2015	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2016	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2017	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2018	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2019	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2020	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2021	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall (resigned role 08.09.21)	Rt Revd Glyn Webster
2022	Rt Revd Norman Banks	Vacancy until early 2023 (the role will transfer to the Bishop of Oswestry)	Rt Revd Glyn Webster (retired 06.01.22) Fr Stephen Race appointed (consecration 30.11.22)

The former Bishop of Maidstone (now retired) is also recorded as having an informal role as a 'Complementarian' Bishop in 62 of the parishes under the oversight of a Diocesan or Suffragan bishop where he was "invited to be involved as issues arose". It is expected that the See of Ebbsfleet will take up these duties when a new bishop is appointed.

**■ Church of England: Investment****Jim Shannon:****[83624]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to promote environmental, social and governance leadership in its investments.

**Andrew Selous:**

The Church Commissioners Responsible Investment Team regularly engages with the companies in which they invest on environmental and social issues, and good governance. The Church Commissioners' Stewardship report 2021 contains examples of work on impact investment, respect for the planet and respect for people: <https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/8e8fdb87-6c32-4bf3-b549-e8209db00976/The-Church-Commissioners-for-England-Stewardship-report-2020.pdf> The Commissioners are signatory members of the Financial Reporting Council, which has approved the report. The Church Commissioners and other global investors are also acting to eliminate commodity-driven deforestation from their investment portfolios to drive progress towards a net zero, nature-positive economy. These investors make up the Finance Sector Deforestation Action (FSDA). Details can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/church-commissioners-and-other-investors-tackle-commodity-driven>

More information about the Church Commissioners' work in responsible investment can be seen here: [Responsible Investment | The Church of England](#)

**■ Church of England: Longfleet****Sir Robert Syms:****[72919]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church of England has made of the implications for its policies on the proper use of Church moneys of the case in the ecclesiastical Parish of Longfleet, St Mary's, Poole; what episcopal oversight was there of that case and when the Commissioners were informed of the details; and if the Commissioners will take steps to share lessons learned for best practice with other diocese.

**Andrew Selous:**

*[Holding answer 10 November 2022]:* The parochial church council is a charitable body subject to the oversight of the Charity Commission. I understand that the Charity Commission is aware of the case following a referral by the Diocese of Salisbury and the office of the Bishop of Salisbury. The National Church Institutions cannot provide guidance to trustees on particular cases, but the Legal Advisory Commission regularly provides updates for PCCs and other trustee bodies on their general duties and obligations.

## ■ Clergy: Vacancies

**Mr Ben Bradshaw:**

[\[82159\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how many vacancies there are for clergy posts in England; and what proportion of those vacancies are in rural areas.

**Andrew Selous:**

The National Church Institutions do not hold sufficient information about the number or proportion of vacancies in rural and urban parishes to be able to respond. The deployment of clergy to benefices and other ministry roles within a diocese is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop.

## DEFENCE

## ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[77550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy are awaiting decision.

**James Heapey:**

As of 3 November 2022 there are 72,269 applications awaiting a decision. We estimate the vast majority of these applicants to be ineligible.

HMG knows everyone who has worked with the British Armed Forces or partners, and MOD has access to this information. As such, we are prioritising finding those we know to be eligible and in need of our support.

We estimate there to be approximately 4,600 ARAP eligible Afghans (including dependants) to be relocated to the UK, of which around 1,620 have already received an offer letter. Of those who have been granted approximately 625 have already moved to safety in a third country. Not all those who are deemed eligible are expected to take up the offer of relocation having successfully settled elsewhere.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[80716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Leave Outside the Immigration Rules (LOTR) applications for additional family members under the Afghan relocation and assistance policy (ARAP) and ex-gratia scheme (EGS), which Department makes the decision on whether to grant LOTR applications under the EGS scheme; how many such applications have been received in total under both schemes; and how many such applications under both schemes (a) have received a positive decision, (b) have received a negative decision and (c) were still pending on 7 November 2022.

**James Heapey:**

When a principal applicant submits a Leave Outside the Immigration Rules (LOTR) application for additional family members, it is initially received by the Ministry of Defence. A decision on whether this application meets the eligibility requirements of

the EGS/ARAP additional family member policy is made by the Ministry of Defence or referred to the relevant sponsoring Government department (dependent upon the role performed by the principal applicant with EGS/ARAP eligibility) to make that decision.

Those found to meet the eligibility requirements are then referred to the Home Office by the Ministry of Defence, who will perform additional checks (such as biometric enrolment and security) in order to make the final decision on the grant of LOTR.

Since August 2021, a total of 1,103 applications for additional family members have been received by the Ministry of Defence.

Of the above, decisions have been made in 401 cases across HM Government.

i) 107 applications have been found to be eligible, in whole or in part, and referred to the Home Office for grant of LOTR.

ii) 234 applications have been found to be ineligible by Defence and the Foreign Office.

iii) 70 applications are awaiting an eligibility decision with Defence and other Government departments. These are at various stages of the decision-making process and are being worked through on a case by case basis, by the relevant Government department, as quickly as practicable.

All casework decisions are taken against a clear framework of eligibility criteria. Timelines regarding LOTR eligibility decisions can vary considerably, dependent upon the complexity of the case, the need to conduct checks with other Government departments, or the length of time it takes for applicants to respond to follow-up queries.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[84903]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, under what circumstances his Department would provide an update to (a) a Member of Parliament and (b) an applicant to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy on a live case under that policy.

**James Heapey:**

All ARAP applications should be acknowledged at the point of submission. Applicant's may then be contacted to request additional information, before an eligibility decision is made. If found to be eligible, applicants will be asked for further information regarding their family members included in their application, for further required checks to be made. Unfortunately, it is not possible to advise the consistency with which these updates may occur, as the timeframes can vary considerably, due to numerous factors, including the level of complexity of the case.

Individual updates or responses outside of the above circumstances are not generally provided, in order to focus resource towards our main effort of identifying and relocating the estimated remaining 4,900 individuals eligible for ARAP (including dependents), using HMG employment records to target efforts.

That said, any enquiries received by the ARAP team will be provided with an automatic reply that should answer the vast majority of questions. All enquiries

received are reviewed in order to identify where applicants are providing an update regarding their individual circumstances, including providing additional information, documentation or advising that they are at risk. In instances where a Member of Parliament has submitted an enquiry, this is forwarded on to the Ministerial Correspondence Unit to ensure an appropriate response is sent from the relevant Minister.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[84904]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's target timeframe is to respond to written enquiries from Members of Parliament on (a) general queries and (b) specific cases on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

**James Heappey:**

In line with Cabinet Office Guidance, the Ministry of Defence aims to respond within twenty working days for written enquiries from Members of Parliament, including those relating to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[84906]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the average month of submission of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications that his Department began processing in November 2022.

**James Heappey:**

Due to the way Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) applications are processed, it is not possible to provide a response to the question asked. Rather than being processed in the order in which they were received, new applications are triaged to separate out those that are clearly ineligible and those more likely to be eligible; which are then allocated to separate casework teams. This change, alongside a new casework system and uplift in resourcing, is allowing the ARAP Team to issue more decisions on applications per month than are being received and make progress on clearing the backlog of cases.

That said, it is recognised that processing times within ARAP can vary considerably, dependent upon a number of factors including the complexity of the case, the need to conduct checks with other Government Departments, or the length of time it takes an applicant to respond to follow-up queries. However, having successfully relocated over 11,800 individuals under the ARAP scheme, the primary focus for the ARAP team is identifying and relocating the estimated remaining 4,600 eligible individuals (including dependents), using HMG employment records to target efforts.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

**[84907]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's target timeframe is to respond to written enquiries from applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme.

**James Heappey:**

All ARAP applications are reviewed on receipt and an immediate request for information is sent to each applicant to obtain more detail on their individual

circumstances, including providing additional information, documentation or advising that they are at risk.

Individual updates are not generally provided in response to enquiries, in order to focus resource on our main effort of identifying and relocating the estimated remaining 4,600 individuals eligible for ARAP (including dependents), using HMG employment records to target efforts.

### ■ **Ajax Vehicles: Testing**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[87759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the maximum duration that Army or MoD crews undertaking User Validation Trials are allowed to remain in the vehicles, on any Ajax family vehicle.

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[87760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether (a) Army and (b) his Department's personnel who are undertaking Ajax-family User Validation Trials have to undertake neurological tests at any stage after operating Ajax vehicles.

**Alex Chalk:**

In addition to extant Army wide driver and crew working hours controls, trial activity duration is not time bound but is carefully monitored to ensure that Army crews remain within the lower action values of the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 throughout the planned activity. User Validation Trials are conducted under a safe system of work that implements these action value controls endorsed by the Safety Assurance Panel. This includes UTAC-Millbrook providing live monitoring of crew noise and vibration exposure levels.

Army crews are not required to undertake neurological tests as part of the trial protocol.

### ■ **China: Armed Forces**

**John Healey:** [\[87738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November to Question 82179 on China: Armed Forces, how many Chinese Armed Forces personnel have been trained by UK Armed Forces personnel as part of training missions outside the UK each year since 2010.

**James Heapey:**

We do not have a record of the number of Chinese personnel trained by UK Armed Forces outside the UK since 2010. The following has been provided since 2014-15:

<b>FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>TRAINING</b>
2014-15	Aviation English Training programme - Multi-Engine
2014-15	Aviation English Training programme - Fast Jet
2014-15	Delivery of lecture at People's Liberation Army No 4 Medical University by Army Medical Officers
2015-16	Military Aviation Language Training
2016-17	Aviation English Language Training
2016-17	Delivery of brief to UN Female Military Officers' Course on UN Peacekeeping at PLA Peacekeeping Training Centre
2016-17	Foot drill instruction for the Hong Kong Police
2017-18	RAF Mountain Rescue Service provision of a biennial standards check and specialist mountain training for the Hong Kong Civil Aid Service
2019-20	RAF Mountain Rescue Service provision of a biennial standards check and specialist mountain training for the Hong Kong Civil Aid Service

This information is not available prior to 2014-15.

In addition to the above we are also aware of Chinese Armed Forces attendance to the Bangladesh National Defence College, to which UK service personnel delivered the Managing Defence in a Wider Security Context course. However the MOD does not routinely keep a record of attendees of such courses.

**John Healey:**

[\[87742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to parliamentary question 82179 on China: Armed Forces, for what reasons 58 personnel from the Chinese Armed Forces were provided with training at UK military sites since 2010.

**James Heapey:**

Training has historically been conducted across all three Services with participants from a range of foreign nations. This assists in building understanding, and insight helps break down cultural barriers and establishes relationships that can be useful in the future.

In the past, this has included a small amount of defence activity with China. None of the activity covered sensitive or classified information. No training has been provided since March 2020.

**■ Defence: Innovation****John Healey:** [\[88809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many loans have been provided to SMEs through the Defence Innovation Loan scheme since it was launched; and what the total value of the loans was in that period.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) and Innovate UK launched Defence Innovation Loans in June 2021 to help small and medium enterprises convert their mature defence innovation into a strong business proposition for defence procurement.

As at 31 October 2022, since launch, six Defence Innovation Loans have been committed. The value of those loans agreed is £ 4,683,301.

**John Healey:** [\[88817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average value is of loans under the Defence Innovation Loan scheme since it was launched.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) and Innovate UK launched Defence Innovation Loans in June 2021 to help small and medium enterprises convert their mature defence innovation into a strong business proposition for defence procurement.

As at 31 October 2022, since launch, six Defence Innovation Loans have been committed at a value of £4,683,301 making the average loan value £780,550.

**■ Defence: Technology****John Healey:** [\[88810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many grants were made to small and medium-sized enterprises through the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme since that scheme was launched in July 2022; and what the total value was of those grants.

**Alex Chalk:**

The closing date for the initial tranche of proposals for the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP) was 27 October 2022 and we expect the first set of intent to fund letters being sent out in May 2023 for successful projects. DTEP has a staged submission process including the review of outline and full proposals by an industry panel, which offer guidance and feedback ahead of a final MOD assessment and Innovate UK awarding a grant.



## ■ Estonia: Helicopters

**John Healey:**

[\[83527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the decision to send periodic deployments of Chinooks and Apaches to Estonia from January 2023 came following a request from the Estonian government.

**James Heappey:**

The decision to make periodic deployments of Chinook and Apache helicopters to Estonia from January 2023 did not come following a specific request from the Estonian Government, but rather from the wider commitments the UK made at NATO's Madrid Summit in June 2022. The UK has since worked closely with Estonia to implement our Madrid Summit commitments and ensure that our force posture is commensurate with Estonia's and NATO's security needs. This culminated in the Secretary of State for Defence and the Estonian Defence Minister signing a Roadmap on 8 November which sets out our joint plan to deliver our Madrid Summit commitments, including the periodic deployment of helicopters, for the forward defence of Estonia.

**John Healey:**

[\[87743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how long he expects each periodic deployment of Chinooks and Apaches to Estonia from January 2023 to last.

**James Heappey:**

During the first six months of 2023 we plan to deploy Chinook helicopters to Estonia for a period of three months and Apaches (together with Wildcat helicopters) for two months. The detail of UK helicopter deployments to Estonia beyond June remains subject to further planning.

## ■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

**John Spellar:**

[\[88807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 16 November, HCWS369, on Shipbuilding Update, who the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ships will be; and what estimate he has made of the balance of work between the shipyards involved.

**John Healey:**

[\[88812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an estimate of the number of Spanish jobs likely to be supported by the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

**John Healey:**

[\[88813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much of the build work for the Fleet Solid Support ships contract will take place at Navantia's shipyard in Cadiz.

**John Healey:** [\[88818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he expects Spanish workers from Navantia to be transferred to UK sites as part of the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

**John Healey:** [\[88824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many workers are employed by Harland and Wolff in (a) Belfast, (b) Appledore, (c) Methil and (d) Arnish to work on the Fleet Solid Support Ships programme.

**John Healey:** [\[88825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many workers were employed at BMT's site in Bath to work on the Fleet Solid Support Ships contract as of 16 November 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

Team Resolute, a team consisting of Harland & Wolff, BMT and Navantia UK has been announced as the Preferred Bidder to build the Fleet Solid Support ships. Navantia UK, a UK registered company, will hold the contract as prime contractor.

The majority of the shipbuild will take place in the UK. The precise balance of work between each individual yard is a matter for Harland & Wolff.

No workers are currently employed in building the Fleet Solid Support ships by Harland & Wolff at any of its sites. No contract has yet been signed for the ships. Harland & Wolff has indicated that it expects the workforce employed to build the ships to grow by around 1,200.

The number of people employed by BMT in the competition for the Fleet Solid Support ships is purely a matter for the company. BMT has indicated that it expects its workforce engaged to deliver the Fleet Solid Support ships to grow to around 120.

The number of jobs sustained in Spain to deliver the Fleet Solid Support ships is a matter for the contractor concerned but it will be fewer than the number of jobs sustained and created in the UK.

The transfer of technology and skills from Navantia to the UK shipbuilding industry that the Fleet Solid Support ship programme will facilitate includes provision for a team of Spanish shipbuilding experts to be resident within Harland & Wolff in order to upskill local staff to deliver the construction in the UK and ensure build productivity and quality levels are met.

**■ HMS Prince of Wales: Crew****Douglas Chapman:** [\[87863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many crew are on board HMS Prince of Wales.

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[87864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the crew compliment of HMS Prince of Wales have been assigned to other vessels or duties during that ship's current repair programme.

**Alex Chalk:**

When fully crewed, HMS PRINCE OF WALES has 797 personnel. While repairs are undertaken, she has retained her fully trained crew in order to maintain the many systems onboard and to quickly deploy once repairs are complete.

Of that crew, 165 Service personnel are currently supporting Military Aid to Civil Authorities and a small number have been or are being provided on a short-term loan to other Platforms.

#### ■ HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[87866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had Babcock plc on (a) the costs of the repair programme for HMS Prince of Wales and (b) agreement of an upper cost budget limit.

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 7 November 2022 to Question 74554.

**Attachments:**

1. HMS Prince of Wales UIN 74554 [UIN 74554.docx]

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[87867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if will make an estimate of the number of (a) Royal Navy and (b) Babcock plc staff who have been assigned to the work to repair HMS Prince of Wales as of 15 November 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

Six Royal Navy staff have been specifically assigned to investigate the cause of, and manage work to rectify, the defect in HMS Prince of Wales. Further Royal Navy staff are working to rectify the defect as part of their wider duties, but the numbers of these staff cannot be ascertained in the time available. It is not for the Ministry of Defence to comment on the resourcing of external contractors.

#### ■ HMS Prince of Wales: Rosyth Dockyard

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[87865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost has been of moving HMS Prince of Wales to Rosyth for repair.

**Alex Chalk:**

HMS PRINCE OF WALES was assisted by the escort tug Njord Viking on her journey to Rosyth at a cost of £246,000. There were no other additional costs involved in the move.

## ■ Merlin Helicopters

**Dave Doogan:** [\[89024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November to Question 82448 on Merlin Helicopters, how many EH101 aircraft are available for service.

**Alex Chalk:**

There are 43 EH101 aircraft currently available for service.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:** [\[84846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) biannual civilian personnel report presents figures on the strengths, inflow and outflow of all civilian personnel employed by the Ministry of Defence and is published at the following link:

MOD biannual civilian personnel statistics: index - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

The table below provides Headcounts and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number of MOD Civilians as at 1 February 2020.

### HEADCOUNT 1 FEBRUARY 2020

<b>TLB &amp; Grouping</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>FTE</b>
UK Strategic Command	7,064	6,737
DIO	4,845	4,713
HOCS	8,548	8,255
Air Command	4,365	4,224
Army TLB	9,422	9,100
Navy Command	2,779	2,668
Unallocated	6	6
Royal Fleet Auxiliary	1,842	1,842
<b>Level 1 Total</b>	<b>38,871</b>	<b>37,545</b>
DE&S Trading Entity	11,013	10,665
Dstl	4,460	4,304
UK Hydrographic Office	822	788

**HEADCOUNT 1 FEBRUARY 2020**

Defence Electronics & Components Agency (DECA)	430	408
Defence Nuclear Organisation	1,772	1,735
Locally Engaged Civilians	3,840	3,731
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>61,208</b>	<b>59,177</b>

The figures for 1 November 2022 are planned for future publication on 1 December 2022.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Small Businesses**

**John Healey:**

[\[88811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total (a) direct, (b) indirect and (c) combined expenditure by his Department was on small and medium-sized enterprises in the (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22 financial years.

**Alex Chalk:**

In financial year 2020-21 the direct spend with SMEs was £0.95 billion, indirect spend was £3.5 billion and combined expenditure was £4.49 billion

The figures for financial year 2021-22 are not yet available and these are anticipated to be published on the gov.uk website in Spring 2023.

**■ Navy: Training**

**John Healey:**

[\[87744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 63927 on Navy: Training, whether any tier-one subcontractors to Capita have been removed from the delivery of Project Selborne by his Department.

**Alex Chalk:**

The following contractors are Tier one sub-contractors to Capita Business Services Ltd for the delivery of the Selborne contract: Raytheon UK, Fujitsu, Elbit Systems UK and the University of Lincoln.

No contractors have yet left Project Selborne, however negotiations are currently underway regarding Elbit Systems UK's departure from Project Selborne. I am unable to comment further due to commercial sensitivities.

**■ Office of Net Assessment and Challenge: Finance**

**John Healey:**

[\[86403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the annual budget of the Office of Net Assessment and Challenge.

**James Heappey:**

The annual budget for the Office of Net Assessment and Change for this current financial year is £4,715,562.

**■ UK Border Force: Military Aid****John Healey:****[86680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any Military Aid to Civilian Authorities (MACA) requests have been submitted to his Department by the Home Office on the use of armed forces personnel to work at ports and airports during the planned period of industrial action by Border Force staff.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence has received a Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) request from the Home Office asking for military personnel to be made available as part of contingency plans to maintain public services and minimise disruption in the event of any industrial action by Border Force staff.

Under the MACA process, Defence always stands ready to respond to requests from civil authorities in line with established MACA principles.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Arts: Advertising****Stephanie Peacock:****[83709]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential importance of the advertising sector for the creative industries.

**Paul Scully:**

Advertising is a thriving sector that makes a significant and valuable contribution to the UK economy and creative industries. It is a key revenue source for many creative industries, underpinning the provision of key services that are positively transforming people's lives. The Advertising and marketing sub-sector contributed £5.1 billion to UK exports in services worldwide in 2020. This was a 27.3% increase from the previous year. The UK is second in [Portland's Soft Power Index](#) and the advertising sector plays a leading role in this ranking. The creative industries provide a distinctive image of our country and our cities, helping them to stand out from competitors. As a home to some of the most influential international advertising agencies, the UK advertising sector makes a significant contribution to the country's soft power by creating awareness of, and familiarity surrounding, the nation's products, services, cultural outputs and distinctive image abroad.

## ■ BBC

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[88018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government is taking steps to support the BBC with preventing cuts to (a) BBC News, (b) BBC World Service and (c) other BBC television channels.

**Julia Lopez:**

As set out in its Charter, the BBC has a vital role to play in enabling all audiences to engage fully with major local, regional, national, and global issues and participate in the democratic process, at all levels, as active and informed citizens.

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent, and decisions over how it delivers its services are for the BBC to make. However, the government is clear that the BBC must continue to deliver its Mission and Public Purposes. It should prioritise using its £3.8 billion annual licence fee income as necessary to deliver that remit.

On top of its licence fee income, FCDO is continuing to provide the BBC World Service with over £94 million annually for the next three years, supporting services in 12 languages and improving key services in Arabic, Russian and English. This is in addition to nearly £470 million FCDO have already provided through the World2020 programme since 2016. In 2022-23, the Government is also providing the BBC with an additional £4.1 million in emergency funding, to support the World Service in continuing to deliver services in Ukraine and Russia.

More broadly, it is important to recognise that the broadcasting sector is changing rapidly, with changes in audience viewing habits and increasing competition posing challenges for all of our Public Service Broadcasters. The BBC needs to be forward looking so it can meet the challenges of modern broadcasting, both at home and abroad.

The Government is committed to working with the BBC and supporting it in pursuing necessary reforms so that it can continue to best serve audiences and remain a global beacon long into the future. We will continue to work with the BBC as we progress this Government's Roadmap for Reform of the BBC in preparation for the next Charter Review, and as we deliver much needed reform to the 'compact', the balance of benefits and obligations conferred on our public service broadcasters, to ensure they can continue to deliver for audiences across the United Kingdom.

## ■ BBC Radio: Local Broadcasting

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[84805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the benefits that local BBC Radio stations provide to communities; and what assessment she has made of the effect the proposed cuts to BBC Local Radio will have on respective communities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[84806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will take steps to help ensure that the BBC continues to provide quality local and live radio output.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[84807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with BBC leadership on proposed cuts to BBC Local Radio.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government recognises the important role that BBC Local Radio plays in bringing communities together, reflecting local experiences and delivering local news. I am therefore disappointed that the BBC is planning to reduce parts of its local radio output.

While it is up to the BBC to decide how it delivers its services, I have met with BBC leadership and shared concerns expressed in recent parliamentary proceedings about reductions to BBC Local Radio. The Government has been clear that, as our national broadcaster, the BBC must make sure it continues to provide distinctive and genuinely local radio services, with content that reflects and represents people and communities from all corners of the UK.

The BBC has outlined that, under current proposals, overall investment in local services is being maintained, which includes £19m from broadcast services being moved to online and multimedia production to adapt to audience changes. The BBC has confirmed that it is protecting local news bulletins throughout the day, and local live sport, and community programming across all 39 stations, and that there will be fully local programming between 6am and 2pm, with neighbouring or regional sharing in most of the remaining listening hours.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of the BBC, is responsible for ensuring that the BBC continues to meet the public service obligations set out in the BBC Charter, Agreement, and Operating Licence. The Government understands that Ofcom is continuing to discuss these proposals with the BBC.

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[84986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the long-term delivery of funding changes to local BBC radio stations on the (a) quality and b) localness of news to listeners in (i) Portsmouth and (ii) the South East.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government recognises the important role that BBC Local Radio services play in delivering local news and reflecting local experiences in Portsmouth and the South East. The Government is therefore disappointed that the BBC is planning to reduce parts of its local radio output.



While it is up to the BBC to decide how it delivers its services, I have met with BBC leadership and shared concerns expressed in recent parliamentary proceedings about reductions to BBC Local Radio. The Government has been clear that, as our national broadcaster, the BBC must make sure it continues to provide distinctive and genuinely local radio services, with content that reflects and represents people and communities from all corners of the UK. The BBC should set the standard in the UK and internationally with high-quality output across its services.

The BBC has outlined that, under current proposals, overall investment in local services is being maintained, which includes £19m from broadcast services being moved to online and multimedia production to adapt to audience changes. The BBC has confirmed that it is protecting local news bulletins throughout the day, and local live sport, and community programming across all 39 stations, and that there will be fully local programming between 6am and 2pm, with neighbouring or regional sharing in most of the remaining listening hours.

Ofcom, as the independent regulator of the BBC, is responsible for ensuring that the BBC continues to meet the public service obligations set out in the BBC Charter, Agreement, and Operating Licence. The Government understands that Ofcom is continuing to discuss the proposed changes to local radio output with the BBC.

#### ■ **British Telecom and Royal Mail: Industrial Disputes**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[84983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on how many occasions she has met the Communication Workers Union to help resolve ongoing industrial disputes related to (a) Royal Mail and (b) BT since taking office.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Secretary of State has not met the Communications Workers Union to discuss the ongoing industrial disputes related to Royal Mail or BT since taking office.

#### ■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Disclosure of Information**

**Layla Moran:**

[\[86583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many (a) non-disclosure and (b) other confidentiality agreements relating to (i) employment, (ii) bullying, (iii) misconduct and (iii) harassment cases have been agreed by their Department in each year since 1 January 2010; and how much money from the public purse has been spent on (A) legal costs and (B) financial settlements for such agreements in each year since 1 January 2010.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is clear that confidentiality clauses should not be used to prevent staff from raising or discussing allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination.

DCMS does not make use of non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements and therefore has also not incurred expenditure related to legal fees or financial settlements.

**■ Internet: Hate Crime****Stephen Morgan:** [\[84959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the impact of recent trends in the level of incel online content on (a) harms to young people and (b) violence against women and girls.

**Paul Scully:**

The online space should not be a refuge for violent misogyny, and this Government is committed to ensuring there are sufficient protections for women and girls online.

Under the Online Safety Bill, all companies will need to protect children and tackle illegal content online, whilst holding platforms to account for their terms of service. Where incel behaviour relates to a criminal offence, or poses a risk to children, platforms will need to tackle this content.

All services will need to proactively remove and prevent users from being exposed to priority illegal content. This includes offences that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as offences relating to sexual images - i.e revenge and extreme pornography - and harassment and stalking.

Women and girls will also be better able to report abuse and should expect to receive an appropriate response from the platform.

**■ Internet: Safety****Lucy Powell:** [\[88888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much from the public purse her Department has spent on (a) staff activity, (b) external research and advice, (c) public consultation and (d) stakeholder engagement on activities related to the Online Safety Bill since May 2018.

**Paul Scully:**

Figures on DCMS's public spending can be found in DCMS's Annual Report and Accounts, available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Spending relating to the Online Safety Bill is a subset of the reported spend of the Security and Online Harms Directorate.

**■ Leisure: Facilities****Charlotte Nichols:** [\[89051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department will take to help prevent leisure centres closing due to energy price rises during winter 2022-23.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Government recognises the impact rising energy prices will have on organisations of all sizes, including on providers of indoor leisure facilities. In September the government announced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, under which

businesses and other non-domestic energy users (including leisure facilities) are being supported.

After an initial 6 months of the scheme, the government will provide focused support for vulnerable industries. A review is currently underway to determine where this should be targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

The Government invested £100 million in the National Leisure Recovery Fund, which supported the reopening of local authority leisure centres and facilities throughout the country after the pandemic.

## ■ **Media: Expenditure**

**Lucy Powell:**

[88886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on (a) staff activity, (b) external research and advice, (c) public consultation and (d) stakeholder engagement related to the (i) Broadcasting White Paper and the (ii) Media Bill since the start of the 2021-22 financial year.

**Julia Lopez:**

Figures on DCMS's public spending can be found in DCMS's Annual Report and Accounts, available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Spending relating to the Broadcasting White Paper and Media Bill is a subset of the reported spend of the Media and Creative Industries Directorate.

## ■ **National Institute of Economic and Social Research: Gambling**

**Scott Benton:**

[85025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason the Gambling Commission allocated funding to NIESR to undertake a study of the Benefits and Costs of Gambling-Related Harm.

**Paul Scully:**

The Gambling Commission does not commission projects but instead assesses any proposals that it receives. Regulatory settlements are a possible outcome of Gambling Commission enforcement action, and this may include the operator paying a financial amount for socially responsible purposes. When this occurs, the Commission may approve the destination of the financial element against set criteria, including that proposals must be for socially responsible purposes which address gambling related harms or other licensing objectives. More information on this process and destinations is available at the Commission [website](#).

## ■ **Radio: Local Broadcasting**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[84808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to protect and support local radio broadcasting.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is committed to supporting the provision of local radio services by commercial and community radio stations across the UK.

Radio continues to demonstrate its huge public value, including recently in response to the coronavirus pandemic, when it expanded its provision of trusted news and information while continuing to provide much-needed entertainment and companionship to its millions of listeners throughout the country. The Government negotiated significant packages of support from Arqiva for commercial stations, as well as providing additional direct funding to ensure that no station was left behind in terms of support with their transmission costs.

In 2019, we introduced legislation allowing Ofcom to license small-scale DAB multiplexes, to provide more community and small commercial stations with the opportunity to broadcast to their local communities. In 2020, we passed more legislation to enable national and local commercial stations to renew their analogue licences for a further period. Following the publication of the Digital Radio and Audio Review in October 2021, we are currently exploring legislative options for securing radio's position on smart speakers.

We have also committed, following a consultation on future commercial radio regulation in 2017, to strengthen local news and information requirements - the key public service aspects of local commercial radio - and to extend this to digital stations as part of a package of changes to update the rules on commercial radio licensing. We intend to bring forward legislation in this area when Parliamentary time allows.

The Government has continued to make funding available to support the growth of the community radio sector, by way of the Community Radio Fund (CRF). The Fund distributes £400,000 on an annual basis to help fund the core costs of community radio stations (of which there are approximately 300 across the UK) and enable the sector to move towards self-sustainability. In both of the last two financial years, we have supported the CRF to go beyond this core funding, with significant uplifts targeted on tackling loneliness and to reflect the sector's important contribution to the government's ambitions on levelling up.

**EDUCATION****■ Childcare: Costs****Alex Sobel:****[85000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the rate of increase of childcare costs.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is committed to improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare. More than £20 billion has been spent over the past five years to support families with the cost of childcare.

In July 2022 measures were announced to increase take-up of childcare support and reduce the costs and bureaucracy facing providers. These plans give providers more flexibility and autonomy, and ensure that families can access government support to save money on their childcare bills. The full announcement can be viewed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-reduce-the-cost-of-childcare-for-parents>.

There is currently a £1.2 million campaign underway, led via the childcare choices website, to ensure that every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for. The website can be accessed at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The department is also actively considering ways to ensure a sufficient supply of childminders, giving more parents access to an affordable, flexible type of childcare. We will continue to look at ways to make childcare more affordable and to encourage families to use the government-funded support they are entitled to.

## ■ Childcare: Portsmouth South

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[84960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the resilience of childcare providers in Portsmouth South constituency; and if she will make a statement.

**Claire Coutinho:**

One of the signs of a healthy and competitive market is that providers may enter and exit it. The key measure of market health monitored by the department is whether local authorities believe that the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children in their area, rather than whether changes occur in the number and type of providers.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The parliamentary constituency of Portsmouth South is in the local authority of Portsmouth. At present, all local authorities, including Portsmouth, report that they are fulfilling their duty to ensure sufficient childcare.

## ■ Children in Care

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[88925]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are in the social care system; and how many of these are in (a) foster care, (b) regulated residential care and (c) unregulated residential care arrangements.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Information on the number of children in social care was published on 17 November in the annual statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoptions, 2022', available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>. The number of looked

after children by placement type can be found in table A2 in the following release: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/275cbaa4-5400-4920-86d1-08da7eccd8d3>.

Residential care includes secure units, children's homes, residential schools, and other residential settings. Unregulated accommodation refers to settings for looked after children that provide semi-independent living or independent living arrangements.

## ■ Children in Care: Siblings

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [84818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help prevent the separation of siblings in the care system.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The Children Act 1989 makes clear that when determining the most appropriate placement for a looked after child, the local authority must, as far as reasonably practicable, ensure the placement is such that the child can live with their sibling if that sibling is also looked after. Positive sibling relationships provide support both in childhood and adulthood and can be particularly valuable during changes in a young person's life, such as leaving care.

There are factors that may mean it is not possible or desirable for siblings to be placed together. This can include children entering care at different times or having different needs due to past experiences or current emotional or behavioural issues. There may also be practical difficulties in accommodating large sibling groups together. It is important that these decisions are informed by an understanding of family functioning and family history, as well the wishes and feelings of children.

Where siblings cannot be placed together, local authorities are required under Schedule 2(15)(1) of the Children Act 1989 to try to promote contact between the child and any relative, including siblings, if this is consistent with the child's welfare and is reasonably practical.

## ■ Classroom Assistants: Pay

**Rachael Maskell:** [88921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that (a) teaching assistants and (b) support staff in schools are paid at a level which aids the (i) recruitment and (ii) retention of those staff.

**Rachael Maskell:** [88922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a national (a) pay scale and (b) process for the negotiation of pay awards for teaching assistants.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[88923]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons her Department has not implemented a national pay system for teaching assistants.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government knows the valuable contribution teaching assistants make to pupils' education, helping to raise attainment and reduce teachers' workload.

Schools have the freedom to set pay for teaching assistants and all support staff. All schools have different characteristics and should make decisions that meet their needs. Many mirror local government pay scales, which are agreed between the National Joint Council and trade unions. Support staff in schools that follow these pay scales will receive a pay rise of 10% on average, which will be backdated to April 2022.

The 2022 Autumn Statement underlines the priority the Government attaches to schools, delivering a significant uplift in funding in this Spending Review period. Core schools funding will increase by £2.3 billion in both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

After adjusting the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 budgets down to account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, £2 billion more than published in 2021.

## ■ Curriculum: Citizenship

**Paul Girvan:**

**[84950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the national curriculum has any compulsory aspects on the study of citizenship of the UK.

**Nick Gibb:**

Citizenship forms a compulsory part of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4. Within citizenship, pupils in secondary maintained schools in England will be taught the workings of Parliament, voting and elections; the role of police, courts and justice; free press, human rights and international law; and the governments of other countries. Citizenship teaching should equip pupils to explore political and social issues, to debate, and to make reasoned arguments. Economic and financial education within citizenship prepares pupils to manage their money well and make sound financial decisions.

The Department does not prescribe how the National Curriculum should be taught, but schools are expected to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils.

The Department has published Political Impartiality in Schools guidance to support teachers in tackling sensitive issues in the classroom in a politically impartial way.

The guidance can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools>.



**■ Department for Education: Civil Servants****Philip Davies:** [\[84836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

As at 1 February 2020, the headcount of the Department was 7179.

As at 15 November 2022, the headcount of the Department was 8358.

This growth reflects a number of key areas, such as emergency response functions in response to COVID-19 and Ukraine, and policy and delivery teams supporting the Department's skills, schools and families reform agenda. This includes ongoing growth of the academies sector. This also reflects specialist digital, data, and technology, and commercial roles, including replacing managed services where possible to deliver greater value for money.

**■ Free School Meals: Cost of Living****Navendu Mishra:** [\[86629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will undertake a review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals in the context of the cost of living crisis.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department continues to monitor the consequences of the rising cost of living and is working with other Government Departments to provide support. The Department will continue to keep free school meal (FSM) eligibility under review to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them. In setting a threshold, the Government believes that the current level, which enables children to benefit from FSM, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one.

The latest published statistics show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming FSM. This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, 37.5% of school children are now provided with FSM.

**■ Home Education****David Morris:** [\[88878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department takes to monitor the education of young people who have been moved from in-school to at-home education.

**Nick Gibb:**

It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to ensure that all children receive a suitable education, including those who are electively home educated. The Government's view is that existing powers, if used in the way set out in the Government's guidance,



are enough for a Local Authority to determine whether the provision at home is suitable.

## ■ Schools: Dairy Products and Meat Products

**Sarah Olney:**

**[87932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has she made of the current School Food Standards mandatory servings of meat and dairy and its impact on the (a) UK's health goals, (b) climate science, and (c) modern dietary choices.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department wants pupils to be healthy and well nourished. The Department encourages a healthy balanced diet and healthy life choices. The standards for school food are set out in the Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 and are to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need throughout the school day.

The requirement in the school food standards to serve meat and dairy products applies to all schools. The Department is aware that for some faith schools, vegetarianism is an important part of that faith. There may therefore be cases where there is no demand for meat and dairy products from any of the school's parents or pupils, and in this scenario it would not be realistic to expect the school to produce meat or dairy based meals that will not be consumed.

The Department has committed to supporting schools to drive up their sustainable practices on food. Schools can voluntarily follow the Government buying standards if they so wish, which include advice around sustainable sourcing. The Department also recognises the importance of plant-based foods from a cultural and environmental point of view. The school food regulations already allow schools the freedom to provide plant-based meals as needed. Meat must be served on three or more days each week and beyond this, schools may provide a meal with any other type of protein every day if they choose to.

The Department's school food standards regulate the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Beyond this, the Department believes that head teachers, school governors and caterers are best placed to make decisions regarding their school food policies, taking into account local circumstances and the needs of their pupils. In doing so, the Department expects schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect dietary and cultural needs. School food policies work best when schools discuss them with parents and pupils, so that parents have the opportunity to raise pupils' particular dietary needs.

## ■ Schools: Disability and Special Educational Needs

**David Warburton:**

[\[84934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress her Department has made on increasing the number of school places available for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is investing £2.6 billion between 2022 and 2025 to support local authorities to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision. This represents a significant investment in new high-needs provision. It will support local authorities to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, and will also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

As part of this commitment, in March 2022 the department announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations amounting to over £1.4 billion of new investment, focused on the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. It is ultimately up to local authorities to determine how to best prioritise their funding to address their local priorities.

The £2.6 billion capital investment in high needs provision announced in October 2021 will also help to deliver up to 60 new special and alternative provision free schools. This is in addition to the 48 special free schools already in the pipeline and 90 special free schools already opened.

## ■ Schools: Finance

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[88781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of the National Association of Head Teachers published on 8 November 2022 that over four in ten schools said they would have to reduce spending on additional targeted interventions for pupils requiring additional support.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is prioritising further funding for schools. The Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for mainstream and high needs schools, of £2.3 billion in 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting Spending Review 2021 (SR21) budgets down to account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2.0 billion greater than published at SR21.

Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year, and this means that next year it will rise by a further £3.5 billion. With these funding increases combined, it will mean a 15% increase in funding within two years. This significant increase in funding

will help schools meet increased pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and also enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments.

These increases will deliver significant additional support to pupils and teachers, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to level-up education across the country.

The Department recognises that every school's circumstances are different, and where schools are in serious financial difficulty, they are encouraged to contact their local authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

**David Morris:**

[\[88877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to provide additional financial support to schools in 2023-24 to help meet demands as a result of (a) pay increases for teaching staff agreed in July 2022, (b) rising inflation and (c) the introduction of a minimum expectation for the length of the school week by September 2023.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is prioritising further funding for schools. The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for both mainstream schools and high needs, of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to take account of the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021.

Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year. It will rise by another £3.5 billion, on top of that, next year. This means a 15% increase in funding in two years. This significant increase in funding will help schools to meet increased pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments, including the minimum 32.5-hour school week.

These increases will deliver significant additional support to pupils and teachers, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to level-up education across the country.

The Department knows that every school's circumstances are different. If schools are in serious financial difficulty, the Department encourages them to contact their Local Authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[88920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the impact of inflation on the affordability of (a) the staff payroll and (b) other aspects of school budgets.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government is prioritising further funding for schools, which will help schools to manage aspects of their budgets, including staff payroll. The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 (SR21) budgets down to take account of the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at SR21.

Schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year. The funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement means it will rise by another £3.5 billion next year. This means a 15% increase in funding within two years. This significant increase in funding will help schools to meet increased pay awards for both teaching and non-teaching staff, wider inflationary costs such as energy costs, and enable schools to meet their White Paper commitments.

The Department knows that each school's circumstances are different. If schools are in serious financial difficulty, they are encouraged to contact their Local Authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, who can provide advice and, in exceptional circumstances, financial support.

**■ Schools: Governing Bodies****Stephen Morgan:**[\[84985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support and development opportunities her Department has helped to provide to school governors over the last five years.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department offers an induction programme for new trust board chairs providing them with guidance on working with the Department.

In addition, the Department funds the recruitment of school governors to Local Authority maintained schools and local governing bodies of academy trusts, through the Department's contractor 'Inspiring Governance', who also offer induction support to recruits. Where governing and trust boards require targeted support to help secure effective governance, the Department runs the National Leaders of Governance programme, contracted to the National Governance Association to deliver.

In the last five years, the Department has also run other programmes, including development for chairs, development for governance professionals, and the recruitment of academy trustees.

**■ Schools: HIV Infection****Stephen Morgan:**[\[84989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that children who are (a) living with or (b) affected by HIV are supported in school following the outbreak of covid-19.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is committed to pupils with medical conditions being properly supported at school so that they have full access to education.

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a new duty on schools to support pupils with all medical conditions. The department published statutory guidance on this for schools, which can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>.

The guidance does not specify which medical conditions should be supported in schools. Instead, it focuses on how to meet the needs of each individual child and how their medical condition impacts on school life.

Schools also have duties under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments and not to discriminate against disabled children, including those with certain long-term health conditions, in relation to their access to education and associated services. Schools must make reasonable adjustments to their practices, procedures, and policies to ensure that they are not putting those with certain long-term health problems at a substantial disadvantage.

There is extensive evidence that the absolute risk of severe disease from COVID-19 to nearly all children remains low. Most children in a clinical risk group aged 5 and above are now well protected after receiving their primary, and for those aged 12 and above, booster vaccination doses. As such, the most vulnerable are no longer at a substantially greater risk than the general population. They are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else on staying safe and preventing the spread of COVID-19, as well as any further advice they may have received from their doctor. The most effective protection against severe disease from COVID-19 for everyone, including those at higher risk from COVID-19, is to get vaccinated.

Those aged 5 years and above in clinical risk groups are being offered an autumn booster of the COVID-19 vaccine. The autumn dose will optimise protection against severe COVID-19, specifically hospitalisation and death, over winter 2022/23.

**■ Specific Learning Difficulties: Lifelong Education****Sir Mark Hendrick:****[84817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing free continuing education for adults with (a) dyslexia, (b) illiteracy and (c) additional reading and learning disorders.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department has invested £1.34 billion in the 2022/23 academic year in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision up to level 3 for eligible adults aged 19 and above, to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship, or further learning.

The AEB also funds Learner Support to support learners with a specific financial hardship and Learning Support to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, including the costs of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Learning Support can cover a range of needs including an assessment for dyslexia, funding to pay for specialist equipment or helpers, and arranging signers or note takers.

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority. These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to be responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

The AEB supports four statutory entitlements to full funding for adult learners, which apply in devolved and non-devolved areas:

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A\* - C or grade 4 or higher
- First full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23
- First full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23
- Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

The ESFA-funded AEB for learners residing in non-devolved areas also supports more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and enhance their wellbeing.

## ■ Steiner Schools Foundation

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[84958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the (a) accountability, (b) transparency, (c) cost to the public purse and (d) sustainability of the Steiner free schools and academies in (i) the South West and (ii) other regions.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department holds all academies and free schools to account through a common framework of statutory obligations and school funding agreements. Funding agreements are published transparently on school and trust websites and GOV.UK.

There are currently no open Steiner free schools or academies in the South West. Three Steiner academies were opened in the South West between 2012 and 2014, in Bristol, Frome and Exeter, as part of the free schools programme. In 2018 and 2019, Ofsted found all three schools to be Inadequate and require special measures.

The Department takes robust intervention action in schools with serious failings. The Department subsequently removed control of these schools from those accountable

for their failure and transferred all three to Avanti Schools Trust in November 2019. The schools no longer operate with a Steiner ethos and have been renamed. Avanti Hall School (previously Steiner Academy Exeter) performed above the local and national average in 2022 by the Key Stage 4 progress measure.

The Department publishes the total capital cost of completed free schools where all works are completed, and the costs are no longer commercially sensitive. For Steiner Academy Exeter, the total capital costs of site acquisition and construction were £12,072,656.52. The costs of constructing the academies in Bristol and Frome have not yet been released. All academies and free schools receive annual revenue funding in line with the National Funding Formula.

The Department continues to maintain the Steiner Academy Hereford, which is not a free school, in the West Midlands. The school is judged Good by Ofsted and performs above the local and national averages by the Key Stage 4 progress measure.

## ■ Students: Finance

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[84811]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to increase student finance in line with inflation in the 2023-24 academic year.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government is reviewing options for uprating maximum loans and grants for the 2023/24 academic year and an announcement will be made in due course.

## ■ Teachers

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[86460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of teachers who qualified in each year from 2010-2020 were still in service in the English state school sector (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, (e) five, (f) six, (g) seven, (h) eight, (i) nine, (j) ten and (k) eleven years after qualifying by (i) region and (ii) local authority.

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[86461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many full time equivalent (a) deferred newly qualified and (b) newly qualified entrants there were to the state school sector in England between 2011-12 and 2021-22, by (i) region and (ii) local authority.

**Nick Gibb:**

Information on the retention rates of qualified teachers and the number of newly qualified entrants to state funded schools in England is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics release. The information can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

87.5% of teachers who qualified in 2020 were still teaching one year after qualification. In the year to November 2021, the full time equivalent of 43,981



teachers joined the state-funded sector in England, including 3,850 deferred newly qualified teachers and 22,059 newly qualified teachers.

The requested figures by region and local authority are in the attached tables. Figures relate to a teacher's original location, which is not necessarily the location they were in when leaving the state funded sector. If a teacher moves to a state funded school in a different local authority or region, they are counted as still in service. One-year retention rates will be the least affected by movement across boundaries. Retention percentages may go up as well as down because the methodology employed allows for non-continuous service where teachers leave and re-join the state funded sector over time.

**Attachments:**

1. 86460 86461 Table [86460 86461 Table 161122.xlsx]

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ African Swine Fever

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[83632]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the (a) Secretary of State for International Trade, (b) Minister for the Cabinet Office and (c) Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential threat posed by African Swine Fever to the British agricultural sector.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Animal Health and Plant Agency has carried out an assessment on the risk of entry of African swine fever (ASF) into Great Britain from the EU Member States and found the overall risk to be medium. HM Government takes the threat to the UK posed by animal diseases very seriously and regularly exercises its contingency plans to ensure they are fit for purpose, including through a UK-wide exercise that simulated an outbreak of ASF in 2021.

We introduced new controls on 1 September restricting the movement of pork and pork products into Great Britain to help safeguard Britain's pig population. Travellers from the EU are no longer allowed to bring pork or pork products weighing over two kilograms into GB, unless they are produced to the EU's commercial standards. More information on the new controls can be found on GOV.UK.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/strict-new-controls-on-pork-and-pork-products-to-protect-britains-pig-sector-against-african-swine-fever](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strict-new-controls-on-pork-and-pork-products-to-protect-britains-pig-sector-against-african-swine-fever).

### ■ Agriculture: Energy and Fuels

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[84868]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to support farmers with the increased costs of food production, in the context of rising fuel and energy costs.



**Mark Spencer:**

We understand that the global spike in oil and gas prices has affected the price of agricultural commodities, which are always closely correlated to energy costs. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to make sure that all businesses, including farmers, food producers, manufacturers and packagers, are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

HM Government is also supporting businesses to improve their energy efficiency by at least 20% by 2030. This could deliver up to £6 billion in cost savings by 2030. We have extended the Energy Intensive Industries Compensation Scheme by three years and more than doubled its budget.

We recognise that for the pig and poultry sectors, animal feed is a substantial input cost. As of 1<sup>st</sup> June, we have successfully concluded the removal of Section 232 tariffs, allowing us to remove the 25% tariff on US maize imports, a key ingredient for animal feed.

Defra has a collaborative relationship with industry which allows us to effectively respond to disruption, should it occur. This was successfully demonstrated in response to unprecedented disruption to both supply and demand throughout COVID-19.

We continue to keep the market situation under review through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments. We have also increased our engagement with industry to supplement our analysis with real time intelligence.

**■ Agriculture: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[82304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on restoring smooth and frictionless trade for farmers in Northern Ireland.

**Mark Spencer:**

UK Government Ministers meet regularly to discuss the Northern Ireland Protocol, including the impact to Northern Ireland's agriculture sector. There are serious issues with how the Northern Ireland Protocol is currently operating. We are determined to resolve these issues, preferably through talks and negotiations or, if need be, via legislation. Defra officials also meet frequently with organisations from the whole Northern Ireland agri-food supply chain, including Northern Ireland farmers.

**■ Avian Influenza: Compensation****Carla Lockhart:**[\[78897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the compensation offered to farmers affected by avian flu in their flocks is adequate.

**Mark Spencer:**

Compensation, as set out in the Animal Health Act 1981, is payable for healthy birds only. There is no compensation available for sick birds or birds that have died. Compensation policy for birds culled by HM Government for disease control purposes is designed to promote prompt reporting of suspicion, as swift and humane culling of birds on infected premises coupled with good biosecurity are critical for preventing the amplification of avian influenza and subsequent environmental contamination and to reduce the risk of disease spread from infected premises.

APHA makes its assessment of the disease status of the birds based on clinical inspection and veterinary judgment. Historically this assessment has been based on the actual number of birds culled rather than the number of healthy birds at the point that culling starts. The amount paid therefore depended on the evolution of the disease on site between the initial assessment of the number of healthy birds close to the start of culling less any that die between the start and end of culling.

In response to feedback from industry on the impact the rapid mortality caused by the current H5N1 strain and risk that escalating cases numbers leading to substantial delays to culling can have on the amount of compensation paid, changes to the compensation scheme for avian influenza have been introduced (effective from the 1 October).

Compensation will now be linked to decisions taken at the start of planned culling rather than at the end. This will allow us to give earlier certainty about entitlement to compensation, better reflect the impact of outbreaks on premises and lead to swifter payments to help stem any cash flow pressures.

The amount of compensation is established by APHA using the relevant [valuation rate card](#) (or for specialist stock by a specialist valuer).

[Biosecurity guidance](#) and a [biosecurity self-assessment checklist](#) have been published by HM Government to assist all bird keepers in instigating and maintaining good biosecurity.

**■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control**

**Matt Western:** [\[74843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many turkeys have been culled since the outbreak of avian flu on 27 October 2021.

**Matt Western:** [\[74844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many geese have been culled since the outbreak of avian flu on 27 October 2021.

**Matt Western:** [\[74845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many ducks have been culled since the outbreak of avian flu on 27 October 2021.

**Mark Spencer:**

To date during the avian influenza outbreak (from 26 October 2021 to the 3 November 2022), 6 million poultry or other captive birds (including chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks, and other kept birds) have died or are being culled and disposed for disease control purposes (2.8 million since Oct 2022; 3.2 million birds between October 2021 and September 2022). This is a small proportion (approximately 0.6%) of overall yearly poultry production (c.20m birds slaughtered for human consumption per week).

Of the total which have died or are being culled and disposed for disease control purposes during the outbreak, approximately 1,282,000 are turkeys, 679,200 ducks and 60,800 geese (equating to approximately 21%, 11% and 1% of the total birds culled respectively) (931,000 turkeys, 336,700 ducks, and 19,000 geese (equating to approximately 33%, 12% and 1% of the total birds culled respectively) since October 2022; 351,000 turkeys, 342,500 ducks and 41,800 geese (equating to approximately 11%, 11% and 1% of the total birds culled respectively) between October 2021 and September 2022).

**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[88903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of the number of each species of bird that has (a) been culled and (b) died in the UK due to avian influenza in each month since 1 January 2022.

**Mark Spencer:**

Between the 1 January and 17 November 2022, the attached table shows the number of birds which have died as a result of avian influenza or have been humanely culled by government for disease control purposes at premises where avian influenza has been confirmed in poultry or other captive birds. Noting these figures are subject to change due to ongoing depopulation activities and the outcomes of final audits.

**Attachments:**

1. Table for PQ 88903 [Attachment for PQ 88903 -Table.docx]

**■ Avian Influenza: EU Law****Stella Creasy:**[\[75911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 October 2022 to Question 67897 on Avian Flu: EU Law, whether the Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals (England) (No.2) Order 2006 which was made, or operated before IP completion day, for a purpose mentioned in section 2(2)(a) of the European Communities Act.

**Mark Spencer:**

I refer the hon. Member to the corrected answer to PQ [67897](#).

## ■ Climate Change: Developing Countries

**John McNally:**

[\[84902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help climate finance reach low-income communities vulnerable to climate change; and whether she has held discussions with her counterparts in high-income countries on this matter.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The UK's International Climate Finance delivered by BEIS, FCDO, and Defra, supports developing nations to adapt and build resilience to the effects of climate change including through improved protecting and restoring nature, improving food security, water management and preparedness against climate-related disasters. At COP27 the Prime Minister announced the UK will triple our funding on adaptation from £500 million in 2019 to £1.5 billion in 2025. In addition, in partnership with the Champions Group of Adaptation Finance, the UK and other climate finance providers are collaborating with low income climate vulnerable countries, to address barriers to increasing flows, quality, effectiveness and accessibility of adaptation finance, including to the poorest people and communities who are already suffering the most from climate change.

## ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Coronavirus

**Philip Davies:**

[\[83579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many employees in her Department work on matters related to covid-19.

**Mark Spencer:**

There are currently 9 employees working on matters relating to Covid-19.

The Government published its Living with Covid plan in February 2022 to help and support citizens as we transition out of the pandemic.

## ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: EU Law

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[88847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on staff activity related to the review of retained EU laws within her Department's areas of responsibility since 1 September 2021; and what funding her Department has allocated for these purposes for the rest of the 2022-23 financial year.

**Mark Spencer:**

Information is not held centrally on the staff activity related to the review of retained EU law or the passage of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill in financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The Retained EU law dashboard was made by the Retained EU Law team, in conjunction with the Government Strategic Management Office and is hosted on

Tableau Public, which is a free platform for hosting public dashboards. The dashboard has been updated at no additional cost.

Defra has undertaken a review of its REUL during 2022. Prior to EU Exit, roughly 80% of Defra's policy areas were governed by EU law. We have already reformed REUL in key areas through flagship legislation such as the Environment Act, Fisheries Act and Agriculture Act. Defra is in the process of analysing its REUL stock and determining what should be preserved as part of domestic law, as well as REUL that should be repealed, or amended. This process will inform our approach to resourcing.

### ■ **Environment Agency: Sewage**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[82434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of a reduction in the Environment Agency's budget on levels of sewage discharge.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government has increased the Environment Agency's overall grant in aid funding by over 40%, and capital funding by 80%, since 2010. We have also boosted funding for the Environment Agency with £2.2 million per year specifically for water company enforcement activity so that robust action is taken against illegal breaches of storm overflow permits.

HM Government has been repeatedly clear to water companies that the levels of sewage pollution at present are completely unacceptable, and they must take significant and urgent action to tackle them.

### ■ **Environmental Land Management Schemes**

**Tim Farron:**

[\[84848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the objectives and strategic specifications for the Environmental Land Management Scheme.

**Mark Spencer:**

We published our environmental and climate ambitions for the environmental land management schemes at the start of 2022.

### ■ **Food: Imports**

**John Redwood:**

[\[83505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage more domestic food growth to help reduce the level of importation of food and the consequent impact on the environment.

**Mark Spencer:**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. We produce 61% of all the food we need, 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year, and these figures have changed little over the last 20 years.

The Government Food Strategy, which was published in June of this year, sets out what we will do to create a more prosperous agri-food sector that delivers healthier, more sustainable and affordable food. The Food Strategy includes a commitment to broadly maintain the level of food that we produce domestically and boost production in sectors where there are the biggest opportunities. As part of this commitment, we are providing support to farmers to help improve productivity. This includes investing over £270 million in innovation by 2029 to support agricultural productivity. In addition, the £48m Farming Innovation Fund is supporting more than 43,000 farmers by providing grants which will also improve productivity.

Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. Recognising the global impact of food production, at COP26 the UK COP Presidency launched the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use. This declaration included the Policy Action Agenda for the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture which raised visibility of and mobilised action for transformation in agriculture, land use and food systems. Action in these areas is essential to ensuring sustainable food production for a growing population, whilst building resilience for farmers and a just transition to reduce emissions and reverse harmful impacts on biodiversity.

**■ Food: Public Sector****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[84867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has plans to mandate the public sector procurement of locally sourced British food and drink.

**Mark Spencer:**

Under domestic and international regulations, we cannot stipulate that food procured for the public sector must be British. Government does however have a manifesto commitment to encourage the public sector to buy British, to support farmers and reduce environmental costs, and a commitment to support start-ups and small businesses via government procurement. Public sector food should therefore champion healthier, sustainable food, provided by a diverse range of suppliers. To underpin this approach, we held a consultation on public sector food and catering policy, this summer. We are analysing the responses received and will consider the feedback when making final decisions on new policy, alongside ensuring we meet our domestic and international legal obligations.

## ■ **Fruit and Vegetables: Production**

**John Redwood:**

[\[83506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to incentivise people to increase fruit and vegetable growing capacity by (a) using modern techniques to extend growing seasons and (b) regulating water and fertiliser use.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government recognises the important role of high-tech growing technologies in ensuring a reliable and sustainable supply of fresh produce for much of the year. Innovation, such as the development of new plant varieties and growing systems, have already allowed growers to extend the growing seasons of a variety of crops, for example strawberries.

Our plan to support the horticulture sector was outlined in the Government Food Strategy, launched on 13<sup>th</sup> June this year. The strategy will aim to increase domestic production through the adoption of a range of growing models, such as controlled environment horticulture systems. A controlled environment can offer environmental benefits, including efficient water use and a reduction in the use of agrochemicals.

In November last year, Defra launched round one of the Farming Investment Fund, committing over £98 million worth of funding for farmers and growers to invest in farm equipment, as well as technology and infrastructure to improve productivity, growth and resilience. As part of the fund there are numerous strands which would benefit fruit and vegetable growers specifically, including a £25 million 'Improving Farm Productivity' theme and a £30 million 'Adding Value' theme. Both of which provide grant support for higher value, more complex project investments which deliver transformative improvements to farmer's and grower's businesses.

Having sufficient water is of vital importance for ensuring optimal yield, growth and quality of our crops. As part of the Farming Investment Fund, Defra launched the £10 million Water Management grant scheme which provides grant funding support for the construction of on-farm reservoirs and the adoption of best practice irrigation application equipment to help ensure farmers have access to water when they need it most. This will build on-farm water resilience, so helping to ensure farmers will have access to the water they need to produce adequate fruit and vegetable yields.

We are also looking at a potential future offer for the Producer Organisation Fruit and Vegetables Aid Scheme. We are currently exploring the best way to support the sector once the Scheme ends in 2025.

## ■ **Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries**

**Steve McCabe:**

[\[83518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 19 October 2022 to Question 61290 on Fisheries, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of immediately prohibiting destructive fishing in all Marine Protected Areas.



**Mark Spencer:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ealing Central and Acton, on 23 September 2022, [PQ UIN 51856](#).

■ **Nature Conservation: EU Law****Stella Creasy:**[\[88868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 is within the scope of section 1 of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

**Trudy Harrison:**

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 falls within scope of section 1 of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

■ **Pesticides: EU Law****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[88904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to retain the restriction on the use of pesticide active substances following the proposed sunset date for retained EU law in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

**Mark Spencer:**

The United Kingdom upholds strict food safety, health and environmental standards, and our first priority regarding pesticides is to ensure that they will not harm people or pose unacceptable risks to the environment. We intend to publish an updated UK National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides shortly. We are currently working through Defra's REUL to identify the actions we intend to take before the sunset date.

■ **Pigs: Slaughterhouses****Tony Lloyd:**[\[84814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice she has received from the Animal Welfare Committee on the use of high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> to stun and kill pigs.

**Tony Lloyd:**[\[84816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what her Department's policy is on the long term use of high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> for the slaughter of pigs.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Animal Welfare Committee's (AWC) predecessor, the Farm Animal Welfare Council provided advice to the Government in 2003 which concluded that "the use of high concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> (80% and above) to stun and kill pigs is not acceptable"; and recommended "Government and the industry should fund research and



development into the use of non-aversive gas mixtures. The use of aversive gas mixtures should be phased out within five years." The Government has supported research into the use of alternatives. This includes inert gas mixtures, where there are practical constraints which have so far restricted commercial uptake. The Government has also part-funded research into low atmospheric pressure stunning (LAPS), however results demonstrated that LAPS is associated with poor welfare in pigs. We continue to engage with AWC on the need for alternatives to high concentration CO<sub>2</sub> stunning of pigs.

We accept that there are longstanding animal welfare concerns associated with high concentration CO<sub>2</sub> gas stunning of pigs. Following publication in 2021 of the Post Implementation Review of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 and as part of our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, we are currently considering a number of improvements that could be made. We have also met with industry to discuss alternatives to high concentration CO<sub>2</sub> stunning of pigs.

## ■ Poultry Meat: Labelling

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[87756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will require all chicken sold for public consumption that has been injected with water and added salt to be labelled clearly as such.

**Mark Spencer:**

Under UK regulations on the provision of food information to consumers, it is already the case that for prepacked chicken, and indeed all meat products and preparations, that has the appearance of a cut, joint, slice, portion or carcass of meat, that an indication of the presence of added water, if the added water makes up more than 5% of the weight of the finished product, must accompany the name of the food. The presence of water and salt, if added, will also be included in the ingredients list. As mandatory information, this indication with the name of the food as well as the information in the ingredients list must be marked in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible, clearly legible and, where appropriate, indelible. It shall not in any way be hidden, obscured, detracted from or interrupted by any other written or pictorial matter or any other intervening material.

Additionally, under the Food Information Regulations 2014 Regulation 7 (applicable in England, similar regulations are in place in the Devolved Administrations) a 'Quantitative Indication', commonly referred to as QUID, of the meat ingredients must be provided which can help the consumer understand what proportion of the whole product is meat.

There is no current intention to add further to these requirements. However, the Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers, and the Government Food Strategy sets out work that we will be taking forward on consumer information and transparency.

**■ Poultry: Avian Influenza**

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[84855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support poultry farmers affected by the 2022 outbreak of Avian Influenza.

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[84856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department have plans to provide support for poultry farms following a cull as a result of Avian Influenza.

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[84857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department are taking to improve the processing time of payments made to farms affected by Avian Influenza.

**Mark Spencer:**

Outbreaks of avian influenza in both kept and wild birds continue to occur at an unprecedented scale across Europe and the UK with cases continuing to be confirmed into year two of the outbreak for the first time. We recognise that these outbreaks are very distressing for the individual poultry farmers that are affected.

Compensation paid for birds culled by HM Government for disease control purposes is designed to promote prompt reporting of suspicion of disease and is only payable for healthy birds as set out in the Animal Health Act 1981. There is no compensation available for sick birds or birds that have died. Compensation is not paid for consequential losses, including business interruption caused by control measures, nor for eggs or poultry meat. Compensation is also not paid for other things that have to be seized because they pose a risk of transmitting disease.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) makes its assessment of the disease status of the birds based on clinical inspection and veterinary judgment. On 28 October we announced a new package of measures to support domestic producers with the impacts of avian influenza. This included changes to the compensation scheme (effective from 1 October).

Compensation will now be linked to decisions taken at the start of planned culling rather than at the end. Such that APHA's assessment of the health of the birds to be culled will now be made shortly before the culling begins or within 48 hours of a decision to cull the birds being made whichever is shorter. This will allow us to give earlier certainty about entitlement to compensation, better reflect the impact of outbreaks on premises and lead to swifter payments to help stem any cash flow pressures. The amount of compensation is established by APHA using the relevant valuation rate card (or for specialist stock by a specialist valuer). The valuation rate cards are updated by APHA five times per year (in November, January, March, June and September) to ensure rates are in line with average market values for the types of birds.

In addition, in consultation with the Food Standards Agency, an easement to marketing rules was introduced in England on 28 October. The measures mean that farmers who breed turkeys, geese, ducks or capons for their meat will have the option to slaughter birds early, and to freeze them, which can then be defrosted and sold to consumers as whole birds, stuffed crowns or 2-3 bird roasts between the period 28 November and 31 December 2022. Products will also need to be properly labelled and accompanied by in-store signage and online information for customers. This option is being introduced to give producers certainty over business planning. The Welsh Government announced a similar concession on 3 November.

We produce over 11 million turkeys in the UK every year. Over the Christmas period approximately 8 million turkeys, 200,000 geese and 100,000 ducks are sold to some of the highest standards in the world. Around 50% of these are usually sold frozen. There is no immediate threat to the food supply chain as a result of the current outbreak, with the introduction of the above measure helping mitigate any potential risks to the supply of seasonal poultry products for the Christmas market.

## ■ Schools: Air Pollution

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[85054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to reduce (a) nitrogen oxide levels and (b) particulate matter where particles are less than 2.5 micrometres (PM2.5) in the vicinity of primary and secondary schools.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Local Authorities have responsibility for managing the local road networks including around schools. Through our local air quality grant, local authorities can bid for funding to take forward projects in their area. Previous projects under this grant have included anti-idling campaigns around schools alongside behaviour change campaigns to raise awareness of air quality issues.

Through our ongoing review of the Air Quality Strategy, we are considering how best to support local authorities to take action to improve air quality in their areas in a strategic way.

## ■ Seas and Oceans: Sewage

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[84982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of the Surfers Against Sewage's Citizen Science Brand Audit 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

No assessment has been made of the implications of Defra policies in relation to Surfers Against Sewage's Citizen Science Brand Audit 2022. However, we have already made significant progress that aligns with their recommendations, introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and brought in measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers,

and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in October 2020. The use of single-use carrier bags has been reduced in the main supermarkets by over 97% with our five, now ten, pence charge. We are going further and have consulted on a ban of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, balloon sticks and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers.

Where we can reduce unnecessary packaging and incentivise more recyclable materials, we will do so. That is why we will introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging from 2024, moving the cost of dealing with packaging waste from households away from local taxpayers and councils and onto the packaging producers. This will encourage businesses to think carefully about how much packaging they use, to design and use packaging that is easily recyclable, and encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging. Our plans to introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers is expected to deter littering; increase recycling; provide higher quality recycle for reprocessors; and drive changes in consumer behaviour.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ **Afghanistan: Islamic State**

**Brendan O'Hara:** [\[88901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of threats from IS-K towards religious minorities in Afghanistan in winter 2022-23.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK monitors the terrorist threat from Afghanistan, including from ISKP, and regularly presses the Taliban to protect religious minority groups. We are working closely with international partners to ensure credible monitoring and accountability mechanisms are in place. The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate was renewed in March 2022 and strengthens these mechanisms through direct engagement with religious minority groups. On 7 October, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate for another year. His recent report to the Human Rights Council included an assessment of the situation for religious minority groups.

### ■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

**Brendan O'Hara:** [\[88902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much aid funding the UK has provided to Pakistan to support Afghan refugees in that country.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK has provided £6.5 million to support refugee preparedness in Pakistan through multilateral organisations (World Food Programme, United Nations Children's

Fund, the UN Refugee Agency and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent). UK funds have been used to support communities in refugee-hosting areas to boost health services and provide additional nutritional support.

## ■ Bahrain: Elections

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[89043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of estimates made by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, published on 16 November 2022, on (a) voter turnout and (b) the number of people who were excluded from the electoral roll in the Bahraini elections on 12 November 2022.

**David Rutley:**

The Government has taken note of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy report published on 16 November 2022. Elections are ongoing and it would be inappropriate to comment more at this stage.

## ■ BBC World Service: Finance

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[83668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits for the UK's international soft power of increasing the amount of funding for the BBC World Service.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[83669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of funding for the BBC World Service; and whether he plans to increase funding for the service.

**David Rutley:**

The Government greatly values the work of the BBC World Service, as recognised in the Integrated Review.

The FCDO is providing the World Service with flat cash funding of £283 million over the three-year spending review period, equating to £94.4 million annually. This year, the FCDO will provide a further £1.44 million dedicated to countering disinformation emanating from the Kremlin with trusted and impartial content.

The Government remains committed to the World Service, and its important role in delivering high quality, accurate and independent broadcasting worldwide.

## ■ Brazil: Climate Change Convention

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[87753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Brazilian counterpart on Brazil's participation at COP27.

**David Rutley:**

The UK welcomed Brazil's commitments at COP26 to eliminate illegal deforestation by 2028 and restore 18 million hectares of forest by 2030. We look forward to working with the current Brazilian Government and the incoming one to protect Earth's natural resources. At COP27, Lord Goldsmith met senior ministerial and Congress representatives from Brazil, including Sônia Guajajara and Joenia Wapichana, with whom he discussed indigenous representation in the Brazilian Congress, the effect land grabbing and illegal mining is having on indigenous people, and potential cooperation with the UK including on trade policies that reflect climate and nature.

**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[82213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of holding discussions with the Government of Mauritius on the sovereignty of the British Indian Overseas Territory.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign Secretary's Written Ministerial Statement (UIN HCWS354) of 3 November 2022 states that the UK and Mauritius have decided to begin negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory /Chagos Archipelago.

It is in the interests of both of our countries to resolve all outstanding issues in relation the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago.

**■ British Nationals Abroad: Death****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[82409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Foreign Affairs Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2014–15, Support for British nationals abroad: The Consular Service, HC 516, whether it is now standard practice for all calls to family members from consular staff dealing with any kind of death abroad to be followed by an email or letter restating the information provided.

**David Rutley:**

When speaking to a bereaved family member following any kind of death abroad, it is standard procedure for consular officers to follow up the initial call with an email, summarising the advice and key information offered in the call. Consular staff support bereaved families by ensuring they have access to written practical information, including bereavement packs, tailored for each country and setting out the specific local processes and practical steps that need to be taken, as well as the FCDO public guide on coping with death abroad.

## ■ **China and Hong Kong: Foreign Relations**

**Catherine West:**

[\[87930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has recorded any instances of UK (a) military and (b) law enforcement personnel engaging in (i) data sharing, (ii) training, and (iii) other exchanges with the military or Government of (A) China or (B) Hong Kong.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We are not aware of any current or planned training provided by UK military or law enforcement to the Chinese or Hong Kong military or Government. In response to China's repeated breaches of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, including Beijing's imposition on Hong Kong of the National Security Law, the Ministry of Defence ceased the provision of all training of Chinese military and Hong Kong law enforcement personnel. We also extended to Hong Kong the arms embargo applied to mainland China since 1989. The UK has never provided training that contained any sensitive or classified information.

## ■ **Embassies: Freedom of Expression**

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[83770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts on the rights to (a) protest and (b) freedom of expression outside foreign embassies in the UK.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary has not had discussions on this specific subject with international counterparts. Peaceful protest and freedom of expression are fundamental parts of British society. Everyone in the United Kingdom has the right to express their views in a peaceful and lawful way.

## ■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Civil Servants**

**Philip Davies:**

[\[84843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development headcount on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 was 7237. The combined headcount of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 was 8015.

## ■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Coronavirus**

**Philip Davies:**

[\[83585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many employees in his Department work on matters related to covid-19.



**David Rutley:**

The FCDO does not track this data centrally. Most ongoing COVID-19 related activity has come to an end or has been integrated into wider work across the department. COVID-19 is, for example, something that is factored into our humanitarian response work.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Labour Turnover**

**Mr David Lammy:**[\[87729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the turnover of staff was in the private office of the Secretary of State in each quarter of the last five years.

**David Rutley:**

DEPARTMENTAL LEAVERS FROM THE FCO/FCDO  
SECRETARY OF STATE PRIVATE OFFICE FOR LAST FIVE  
FINANCIAL YEARS

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Financial Year	Leavers Turnover rate
2021-22	12%
2020-21	28%
2019-20	24%
2018-19	0%
2017-18	0%

■ **Haiti: Cholera**

**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[88829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to assist the Haitian government tackle the cholera epidemic in that country.

**David Rutley:**

The FCDO is engaging with international partners and NGOs to help contain the spread of cholera throughout the world. Through our contributions to the UN and other international organisations, we are assisting the Haitian government's efforts to address systemic in-country issues which have exacerbated their recent outbreak. The difficult security situation within Haiti has impeded the transport of supplies, including fuel, which means sanitation facilities in some areas have ceased functioning. We are using our platform within the UN Security Council to help stabilise Haiti so international support can reach people in need.



## ■ Iran: Arms Trade

**Mark Jenkinson:**

[\[85009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held discussions with his counterpart in Iran on the potential supply of ballistic missiles to Russia for use in Ukraine.

**David Rutley:**

The UK condemns Iranian support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has made this directly clear to Iran. Iran's supply of drones is in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The supply of ballistic missiles to Russia would be a significant escalation. On 20 October new UK sanctions targeted Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. We are working with France and Germany to support a UN investigation into the Iranian transfers, and we will continue to work with the international community to hold Iran and Russia to account.

## ■ Iran: BBC Persian Service and Press Freedom

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[87752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to ensure Iranians can access (a) independent media and (b) the BBC Persian Service.

**David Rutley:**

The Foreign Secretary continues to raise the issue of the Iranian peoples' right to access independent media, including the BBC Persian Service, with the Iranian government, as well as in multilateral fora.

The UK is a fierce champion of media freedom and proud member of the Media Freedom Coalition. We condemn the Iranian authorities' crackdown on protestors, journalists and internet freedom, and continue to raise our concerns with Iran at all appropriate opportunities.

## ■ Iran: Human Rights

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[82195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Iranian counterparts on the importance of upholding international human rights standards.

**David Rutley:**

The UK raises Iran's human rights record at all appropriate opportunities, both directly with Iranian authorities in London and via His Majesty's Ambassador in Tehran. On 3 October, the Foreign Secretary summoned Iran's most senior diplomat in the UK, Mehdi Hosseini Matin, to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. We outlined our condemnation of the Iranian government's repression of human rights during protests and urged restraint. This message was reiterated again

in a meeting on 26 October. We continue to work with partners to hold Iran to account, through multilateral fora such as the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly Third Committee.

## ■ Iran: Journalism

**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[87751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on potential threats to Iranian journalists in (a) that country and (b) the United Kingdom.

**David Rutley:**

On 11 November the Foreign Secretary summoned Iranian Chargé d’Affaires, Iran’s most senior representative in the UK, regarding a series of serious threats against journalists living in the UK. The Foreign Secretary made it clear that we do not tolerate threats to life and intimidation of any kind towards journalists, or any individual, living in the UK. The UK ambassador has spoken with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on four occasions about their complaints at media reporting of the protest in the UK. The UK is a fierce champion of media freedom and proud member of the Media Freedom Coalition. We condemn the Iranian authorities’ crackdown on protestors, journalists and internet freedom, and continue to raise these issues with Iran at all appropriate opportunities.

## ■ Iran: Nuclear Power

**Brendan Clarke-Smith:** [\[83763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of instituting snapback sanctions on Iran in accordance with the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal.

**David Rutley:**

We have always been clear: Iran’s nuclear escalation is unacceptable. It is threatening international peace and security and undermining the global non-proliferation system.

A viable deal was put on the table in March which would have returned Iran to full compliance with its JCPoA commitments and returned the US to the deal.

Iran refused to seize a critical diplomatic opportunity to conclude the deal with continued demands beyond the scope of the JCPoA.

We are considering next steps with our international partners.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[83804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran’s compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

**David Rutley:**

Iran's nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today. It is escalating its nuclear programme, including producing Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU), which is unprecedented for a state without a nuclear weapons programme.

Iran's nuclear escalation is threatening international peace and security and undermining the global non-proliferation system.

We are considering next steps with our international partners.

**Andrew Percy:**[\[84870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of providing sanction relief to Iran under a renewed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal.

**David Rutley:**

Iran's nuclear escalation threatens international peace and security and risks undermining the global non-proliferation system. A viable deal was put on the table in March which would have returned Iran to full compliance with its Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) commitments and returned the USA to the deal.

Iran refused to seize the opportunity to conclude the deal with continued demands beyond the scope of the JCPoA. We are considering next steps with our international partners. The UK has sanctions designations in place on over 300 Iranian individuals and entities including for their roles in weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, and terrorism.

**Iran: Venezuela****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[87754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications of reports that Venezuela and Iran are establishing a maritime bridge between the two countries for the shipping of commercial products by sea.

**David Rutley:**

The UK is following cooperation between Iran and Venezuela closely and will continue to stand up for UK values and security interests, and those of our partners. The FCDO works closely with the relevant cross government enforcement bodies to ensure the robust implementation of existing UK sanctions. We have sanctioned 41 Venezuelan individuals responsible for human rights abuses, the undermining of democracy and corruption offences, and over 300 Iranian individuals and entities in relation to activities including human rights abuses, terrorism and weapons proliferation.

**■ José Quitumbo Cayapú****Fabian Hamilton:** [\[86406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide support to the Memoria Viva trade union in Colombia in response to reports that one of its members, Jose Quitumbo Cayapú, was killed on 5 November.

**David Rutley:**

To date, the UK has spent over £69 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia and improve stability and security. Our funding is supporting the Colombian Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, transitional justice mechanisms, and strengthening the security and participation of communities in conflict-affected areas.

Colombia is an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country, and we will continue to support programmes that help to protect former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) combatants and other groups affected by violence.

**■ Julian Assange****Kenny MacAskill:** [\[89032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he or (b) officials in his Department have met with US officials to discuss Julian Assange.

**David Rutley:**

The Government has discussed aspects of this matter as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US.

**■ Nepal: Migrant Workers****Catherine West:** [\[87929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Business (ii) representatives of the Government of Nepal on (i) recruiting migrant labour from Nepal and (b) labour conditions for those migrants.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary has not discussed migrant labour or labour conditions with representatives of the Government of Nepal. The Foreign Secretary also has not discussed these issues with the Secretary of State for Business.

**■ Pakistan: Humanitarian Aid****Brendan O'Hara:** [\[88900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to flooding in Pakistan in summer and autumn 2022, what steps his

Department took to help ensure that religious minority communities in Pakistan had equal access to UK-funded humanitarian aid in that country.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK is working with partners to ensure that humanitarian aid is targeted towards vulnerable and marginalised communities. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia and Minister for Human Rights, met with Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change, Sherry Rahman, on 14 October to discuss the impacts of flooding and how the UK can best help long-term recovery efforts. During his October visit, Lord Ahmad raised human rights, including those of religious minorities, with both Pakistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Human Rights.

■ **Peru: USA**

**Fabian Hamilton:**

[\[87755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Peruvian counterpart on reports that indigenous leaders from the Peruvian Amazon are to travel to the US to lobby banks to cut financial ties with Petroperú.

**David Rutley:**

The UK Government has a significant dialogue with indigenous groups and environmental defenders in Peru. Officials at the British Embassy in Lima promote the rights of indigenous groups in Peru and support them in raising concerns. HMG regularly discusses the impact of climate change and environmental degradation with the Peruvian Government and these were core themes at our annual UK-Peru Political consultations in August this year.

■ **Qatar: Migrant Workers**

**Tony Lloyd:**

[\[86408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the International Labour Organisation's November 2021 report, One is too many: The collection and analysis of data on occupational injuries in Qatar, what representations he has made to his Qatari counterpart on the unexplained deaths of thousands of migrant workers over the last 10 years in connection with World Cup-related and private construction projects.

**David Rutley:**

We welcome the steps Qatar has taken to date on workers' rights, with the priority now the full implementation and enforcement of those reforms. We encourage continued close collaboration between the Government of Qatar and the International Labour Organization (ILO) during the second phase of their technical cooperation programme. The former Minister for the Middle East met the Qatari Minister for Labour in July to discuss this issue. The UK Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy visited Doha on 9 October for a range of meetings to discuss how the UK can partner with Qatar and the ILO to support further progress in 2023. We look forward to a

sustained partnership that supports continued advancement on this important issue translating into tangible progress for migrant workers.

#### ■ **Russia: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

**Nickie Aiken:** [\[83758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the veracity of reports the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is providing training to the Russian military.

**David Rutley:**

The UK agrees with the US assessment that Iranian personnel have been in Crimea assisting Russia. The UK condemns Iranian support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine: Iran's supply of drones is in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. On 20 October new UK sanctions targeted Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. We are working with France and Germany to support a UN investigation into the Iranian transfers, and we will continue to work with the international community to hold Russia and Iran to account.

#### ■ **Sudan: Armed Conflict**

**Tim Farron:** [\[84849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help mitigate the conflict in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states in the Republic of Sudan.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

We condemn the recent violence in the Blue Nile State and South Kordofan. We have met with the Sudanese authorities and urged them to allow unfettered humanitarian access; a message our Ambassador to Sudan reiterated in a tweet on 21 October. On 27 October, the UK along with partners, also secured an Any Other Business (AOB) discussion on the recent violence in the UN Security Council, to highlight the responsibility of the Sudanese authorities to protect civilians. During initial violence in Blue Nile State in July, the UK provided approximately £550,000 in humanitarian support to those affected in the region through our partners, including the multi-donor Sudan Humanitarian Fund. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and press Sudanese authorities to deliver their obligation to protect civilians.

#### ■ **USA: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

**Lee Anderson:** [\[83762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of reports the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps involvement in attempted assassinations of senior U.S. Government politicians and officials.

**David Rutley:**

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments not to comment on intelligence matters. We have long been clear about our concerns over the malign activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The UK has designated almost 300 Iranian entities and individuals including in relation to human rights, nuclear proliferation and terrorism. This includes the designation of the IRGC in its entirety. The UK is committed to working with the international community to ensure Iran abides by international laws and norms and is held to account for its destabilising activity.

**■ Yemen: Peace Negotiations****Tim Loughton:**[\[82145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the truce in the Yemen conflict which expired on 2 October 2022, what steps his Department is taking to support a further truce.

**David Rutley:**

The UK plays a leading diplomatic role in Yemen, we continue to encourage the parties to engage in the UN-led peace process and maximise our role as the penholder at the UN Security Council to extend the truce. We are providing technical advice, engaging with regional actors and the UN and supporting discussions on the economic, security and political future of Yemen. Yemenis experienced significant tangible benefits from the truce and the UK urges all parties to refrain from provocations, engage with the Special Envoy on his proposals and protect progress so far.

**■ Yemen: War Crimes****Tim Loughton:**[\[82146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to secure the establishment of an international, independent and impartial accountability mechanism to document evidence of alleged abuses and violations of (a) International Humanitarian Law and (b) International Human Rights Law by warring parties in Yemen.

**David Rutley:**

The UK voted in support of the resolution to renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen. The Group had a crucial role to play in providing ongoing reporting on the actions of parties. We continue to urge the parties involved to investigate these allegations and take action to promote and protect human rights. Yemen remains a human rights priority country for the UK. We urge all parties to respect International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and we aim to help create the conditions for the legitimate Government to improve its capacity to protect human rights.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Accident and Emergency Departments**

**Philip Davies:** [\[83572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of A&E consultations were (a) face to face consultations and (b) carried out by GPs, in each of the last five years.

**Will Quince:**

This information is not collected in the format requested.

**■ Adult Social Care Discharge Fund**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[86517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to formally allocate funding from the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to social care providers.

**Helen Whately:**

As announced on 16 November 2022, the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund will be provided to integrated care boards and local authorities. These allocations are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-discharge-fund-local-authority-and-integrated-care-board-icb-allocations>

The first tranche will be distributed in December 2022 and the second at the end of January 2023.

**Cherilyn Mackrory:** [\[86607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on implementing the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund.

**Helen Whately:**

As announced on 16 November 2022, the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund will be distributed to integrated care boards and local authorities in two tranches. The first will be distributed in December 2022 and the second in January 2023. Details of these allocations is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-discharge-fund-local-authority-and-integrated-care-board-icb-allocations>.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[89027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 55094 on Adult Social Care Discharge Fund, on what date his Department will formally allocate monies from the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to social care providers.



**Helen Whately:**

As announced on 16 November 2022, the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund will be provided to integrated care boards and local authorities. These funding allocations are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-discharge-fund-local-authority-and-integrated-care-board-icb-allocations>

The first tranche will be distributed in December 2022 and the second at the end of January 2023.

## ■ Ambulance Services: Standards

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[82412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the average waiting time for an ambulance in England (a) in August, (b) in September, (c) in October and (d) from 1 November to 8 November 2022.

**Will Quince:**

The information is not collected in the format requested.

The following table shows the mean average ambulance waiting times in hours, minutes and seconds for Category 1, 2, 3 and 4 incidents in England in each month from August to October 2022.

MONTH	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4
August	9:08	0:42:44	5:41:13	7:27:56
September	9:19	0:47:59	6:51:31	7:48:12
October	9:56	1:01:19	8:49:35	9:54:11

Source: NHS Ambulance Quality Indicators.

## ■ Antidepressants: Children and Young People

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[86661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of GPs prescribing anti-depressants to children and young people, without assessment from a psychiatrist, as recommended in NICE guidance.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[86687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children and young people who have been prescribed anti-depressants by their GP, without assessment from a psychiatrist, as recommended in NICE guidance.

**Will Quince:**

No specific assessment has been made. Clinicians are responsible for working with patients to determine the appropriate course of treatment, taking into account best

prescribing and practice guidance and the commissioning decisions of local integrated care boards.

## ■ **Cancer: Children**

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[85051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps are being taken to (a) improve childhood cancer diagnosis times and (b) raise awareness of child cancer symptoms through dedicated resources for both GPs and parents.

**Helen Whately:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence provides guidance for general practitioners (GPs) on the symptoms of cancer in children. The Royal College of General Practitioners sets the training curriculum for GPs which states that in order to demonstrate the core competences in the care of children and young people, GPs should be aware of the early presenting symptoms of childhood cancers. Children's cancer services are contained in 14 specialist principal treatment centres. A child with suspected cancer should be referred directly to a centre, which will make the diagnosis and direct the provision of treatment.

There are no specific plans to raise awareness of childhood cancer symptoms through dedicated resources for parents.

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[85052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to support research to investigate the long-term effects of treatment on childhood cancer survivors so that they can be supported better later in life.

**Will Quince:**

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). In 2020/21, the NIHR's expenditure on cancer research was £73.5 million. The NIHR is currently funding 15 research projects into the treatment of childhood cancer survivors, with committed expenditure of approximately £11.7 million since April 2017.

The NIHR is also supporting the delivery of research funded by partners in the charity and public sectors into the treatment of childhood cancers. Since April 2017, the NIHR Clinical Research Network has supported seven related studies. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including childhood cancer. Applications submitted to are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made based on the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

**Carla Lockhart:** [\[85053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps are being taken to encourage more cancer patients to donate tissue to assist with research into childhood cancers.

**Will Quince:**

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR has launched the online 'Be Part of Research' which enables individuals to search research studies currently recruiting participants in the United Kingdom, which is available at the following link:

[www.bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk)

Users may search based on health conditions, age range and location and access further detail, such as eligibility and participation criteria, which may include tissue donation.

**■ Cancer: Medical Treatments****Dr Dan Poulter:****[84861]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for cancer treatment.

**Will Quince:**

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years, including cancer services. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. This funding aims to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million additional checks and procedures and 30% further elective activity by 2024/25 than pre-pandemic levels.

The plan also sets out how NHS England will return the number of people waiting more than 62 days to start treatment following an urgent referral due to suspected cancer to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023. We have established 91 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) to ensure patients receive earlier diagnostic tests, including for cancer. We will deliver up to 160 CDCs which will allow the NHS to provide up to 17 million tests by March 2025, with capacity for a further nine million per year once fully operational.

**■ Care Quality Commission****Rachael Maskell:****[86531]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) pace and (b) effectiveness of the CQC in securing change to services that require improvement.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England, which ensures that health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high quality care and encourages care services to improve. Where the CQC identifies areas for improvement, it will report on items a provider needs to improve, although it does not prescribe how these should

be made. The CQC will re-inspect to confirm progress and remains in regular contact with providers and commissioners to gain assurance on improvements.

The CQC can also take enforcement action and providers have a right of appeal against such action. The severity of action is proportionate to its findings and is set out in the published enforcement policy. Through its enforcement, the CQC can require providers to make changes within a specified time frame, taking more robust action where improvements are not satisfactorily made. In the most severe cases, the CQC will use its powers to remove providers from its register and the ability to deliver services.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of Care Quality Commission reports which have found repeated failings of regulated providers of services.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

The Care Quality Commission publishes inspection reports and a monthly care directory with ratings online. Its inspection reports can include the latest ratings for the services and providers inspected and are used by the regulator to highlight where there may be repeated failings by regulated providers.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission as the regulator of community and inpatient mental health services facilities; and if he will make a statement.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England, including mental health services. The CQC also takes enforcement action where necessary if it identifies a breach of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

The CQC gathers and analyses data from service users, providers, system partners and stakeholders to monitor the quality of care and address specific issues during inspections. After inspections, the CQC can take enforcement action and providers must formulate an action plan where standards have not been met. In independent and National Health Service mental health settings in 2020/21, the CQC took 174 regulatory actions and there were 225 such actions in 2021/22. As of July 2022, 77% of all mental health core services were rated as good or outstanding.

## ■ **Community Nurses and Midwives: Safety**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[83628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the level of risk faced by district nurses and community midwives when

entering homes alone in (a) rural and (b) other areas; and if he will take steps to provide security devices to nurses and other staff.

**Will Quince:**

We are supporting healthcare providers and systems to fulfil the statutory duties to keep staff safe and protected under health and safety legislation.

NHS England established an NHS Violence Reduction Programme in 2019 and launched the Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard in January 2021. This requires all National Health Service commissioners and providers of NHS-funded services to review its status against the Standard and provide board-level assurance. NHS England is supporting several integrated care systems pilot areas in rural and other areas to improve responses to violence and learning from these pilots will be shared. This aims to reduce violent incidents by emphasising preventative strategies, adopting a public health approach and supporting the physical and mental well-being of staff.

■ **Dementia: Health Services**

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[86684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 31 October 2022 to Question 65828 on Dementia: Health Services, whether he has made a recent assessment of the quality of dementia care plan reviews carried out as part of the Quality and Outcomes Framework; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

No formal assessment has been made.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Civil Servants**

**Philip Davies:**

[\[84842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Will Quince:**

As of 15 November 2022, there were 3,978 civil servants in the Department. There were 1,766 civil servants in the Department on 1 February 2020.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Coronavirus**

**Philip Davies:**

[\[83584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many employees in his Department work on matters related to covid-19.

**Will Quince:**

This information is not collected centrally in the format requested. Departmental staff work on multiple policy matters simultaneously.

**■ Department of Health and Social Care: Redundancy Pay****Christine Jardine:**[\[86568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in his Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 17 November 2022]:* The provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation. Details of the severance payments made to Ministers on leaving office are published in the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts.

**■ Dermatitis: Diagnosis****Jim Shannon:**[\[88875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Not Just Skin Deep report by Allergy UK published 22 Nov 2021, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that healthcare professionals have clear guidelines to help diagnose patients with atopic dermatitis.

**Jim Shannon:**[\[88876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has to help ensure Integrated Care Systems develop (a) referral and (b) commissioning policies for skin conditions, including atopic dermatitis.

**Helen Whately:**

Integrated care boards are responsible for working with local communities to understand the needs of the local population and to commission services to meet those needs, including for patients with atopic dermatitis and other skin conditions.

**■ Eating Disorders: Health Services****Rachael Maskell:**[\[87884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of NHS eating disorder services.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific assessment has been made. In September we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will increase access to National Health Service mental health and eating disorder services. Ensuring easier access to general practice will expand this route to access mental health services.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing approximately £1 billion in community mental health care for adults with severe mental illness including eating disorders, by 2023/24 and an additional £53 million per year in children and young people's community eating disorder services to increase capacity in the 70 community eating disorder teams.

## ■ Emergency Calls: Standards

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[85027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to decrease the average time taken to answer a 999 call.

**Will Quince:**

To support 999 call answering times, the NHS winter plan will boost the number of 999 call handlers to 2,500 by December 2022. In addition, a new digital intelligent routing platform is being introduced which shares call handling demand across ambulance trusts so they can support each other during the busiest periods.

Mean 999 call answering times is one of the key metrics being monitored this winter through the Integrated Care Board assurance framework to ensure that providers are held to account for performance.

## ■ Food: Advertising

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[88835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department has made an impact assessment on extending the delay to restrictions banning adverts of products high in fat, salt or sugar on television before 9:00pm and paid-for adverts online.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We will provide further information on the delay in due course.

## ■ Health Services: Weather

**Dan Carden:**

[\[83750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Insight Panel survey by the Royal College of Radiologists on the proportion of doctors who felt unprepared for winter pressures; and what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure that the NHS is able to cope with the anticipated level of demand for NHS services.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 15 November 2022]:* No specific assessment will be made. We recognise the pressure the National Health Service (NHS) faces over winter, and we are taking a whole-system approach to ensure people get the care they need, when they need it.

The NHS is maximising recruitment of new staff in primary care through the winter, including care co-ordinators and social prescribing link workers. We made £520 million available to improve access and expand general practice (GP) capacity during the pandemic. This is alongside an investment of at least £1.5 billion on GP capacity in 2020 to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024, helping people access the primary care they need and avoid unnecessary demand on urgent care and A&E.



The NHS has set out a plan to substantially increase bed capacity and resilience this winter. NHS bed capacity will be increased by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, including a mix of new physical beds and expanding the use of innovative virtual wards to treat patients safely at home. Building on the NHS plan, Our Plan for Patients set out further urgent action, including £500 million for an Adult Social Care Discharge Fund, helping people get out of hospitals quickly, freeing up beds and reducing long waits in A&E.

We are preparing for variants of COVID-19 and seasonal respiratory challenges through delivering an integrated COVID-19 booster and flu vaccination programme, minimising hospital admissions from both viruses.

### ■ Health: Disadvantaged

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[88780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's announcement of £50 million to help tackle health inequalities through research on 11 October 2022, how much of that funding will be made available to research the links between (a) speech, language and communication needs and health inequalities and (b) difficulties with eating, drinking and swallowing and health inequalities.

**Will Quince:**

The funding for Health Determinants Research Collaborations has been awarded to 10 local authority areas for research to support evidence-based decision-making within local government. While the funding is not ring-fenced for specific topics, it will enable these areas to undertake and evaluate research to address issues relevant to the local population.

### ■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[83735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for (a) routine screening appointments, (b) cancer treatment and (c) surgical procedures in the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. This funding aims to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million additional checks and procedures and 30% further elective activity by 2024/25 than pre-pandemic levels.

NHS England has committed to ensuring that 95% of patients who need a diagnostic test receive it within six weeks, by March 2025. The National Health Service will also

work with patient groups and stakeholders to monitor and improve waiting times for outpatient appointments over the next three years.

NHS England has committed that 75% of patients who have been urgently referred by their general practitioner for suspected cancer are diagnosed or have cancer ruled out within 28 days by March 2024. Community diagnostic centres will increase diagnostic capacity and ensure earlier detection and increasing use of surgical hubs will reduce delays in treatment. NHS England is using innovative techniques and adopting pioneering technology such as artificial intelligence and robotic surgery and it has launched the My Planned Care platform, which provides data on average waiting times for every NHS provider.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[83737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his expected timetable is for average waiting times for NHS services to return to levels recorded before the covid-19 pandemic.

**Will Quince:**

While there is no specific expected timetable, the 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. This funding aims to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million additional checks and procedures and 30% further elective activity by 2024/25 than pre-pandemic levels.

The target to eliminate waiting times of two years or more for elective procedures was met in July 2022 and we aim to eliminate waiting time of eighteen months or more by April 2023. This will be achieved through increasing capacity, seeking alternate capacity in other trusts or the independent sector and engaging with patients to understand choices made regarding their care.

## ■ **Huntington's Disease: Research**

**Amy Callaghan:**

**[85019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of public funding for the research of (a) adult- and (b) juvenile-onset Huntington's disease.

**Will Quince:**

The Government primarily funds research into rare conditions, such as Huntington's disease and Juvenile-onset Huntington's disease, via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

From 2017/18 to 2021/22, funding for research into Huntington's disease was £32.6 million and in 2021/22, expenditure was £4.5 million. The NIHR and UKRI welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including adult

Huntington's disease and Juvenile-onset Huntington's disease. While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR and UKRI award funding through open competition to ensure the highest quality research is funded.

#### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Cat Smith:** [\[65846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood of 23 September 2022 on sodium valproate.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We apologise for the delay in replying to the hon. Member. A reply will be sent as soon as possible. Additionally, my office has reached out to arrange a meeting on sodium valproate.

#### ■ **Mental Health**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a review of how the NHS and local authorities could work more closely in order to help improve assessments of causation and environmental factors impacting on mental health.

**Maria Caulfield:**

There are no current plans to do so. Following the call for evidence earlier this year on long term actions to support mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention, we are currently considering the responses received and further information will be available in due course.

#### ■ **Mental Health Services**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of NHS mental health crisis teams; and what steps he is taking to help improve those services.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No formal assessment has been made. However, the NHS Long Term Plan commits to 100% coverage of 24 hours a day, seven days a week age-appropriate crisis care via NHS 111, Crisis Resolution Home Treatment functions for adults and provision for children and young people combining crisis assessment, brief response and intensive home treatment functions by 2023/24. In addition, all general hospitals will have mental health liaison services.

For those with severe needs or in crisis, all National Health Service mental health providers have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week all-age urgent mental health crisis lines a year earlier than planned. We are investing £150 million to

increase the range of services available, including crisis cafes, safe havens and crisis houses and during the winter this will also address step down care, home adaptations, improving crisis lines and employment of social care staff. Of this funding, £7 million will be used to deploy dedicated mental health ambulances from 2023/24.

NHS England consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards, including an 'urgent' and 'very urgent' referral to a community based mental health crisis service. We are working with NHS England on the next steps.

## ■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[87883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the number of children and young people requiring placement in institutional mental health facilities.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to expand National Health Service mental health services, including community and school-based services to ensure that more children and young people receive support without requiring an inpatient admission. In 2021/22, we also invested £79 million in children's mental health services, including enabling approximately 22,500 additional children and young people to access community health services and a further 2,000 to access eating disorder services.

There are currently 287 mental health support teams in approximately 4,700 schools and colleges offering support to children experiencing anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues and there are plans for 500 teams to be operational by 2024. All NHS mental health providers have 24 hours a day, seven days a week all-age urgent mental health helplines available and crisis resolution and intensive home treatment teams.

## ■ **Mental Health Services: Departmental Coordination**

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[86696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to support integrated working across government to address the needs of people with mental health problems.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department continues to develop and deliver cross-Government policies to support people with mental health needs. Following a call for evidence on long term actions to support mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention, we are currently considering the responses received.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Integrated Care Systems

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the importance of joining up Mental Health trust areas with Integrated Care Systems.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The boundaries of integrated care systems were developed from pre-existing partnerships determined by local consent. The Health and Care Act 2022 provides for National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts, including mental health trusts, to be formal partners of more than one integrated care board, based on the importance to the Five Year Joint Forward Plan delivery and the level of services provided within the area.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Standards

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[87887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make provision to place an enabling team within a trust where mental health trusts receive an inadequate or requires improvement rating from the Care Quality Commission.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Where integrated care boards (ICBs) and National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts, including mental health trusts, require more formal intervention and mandated support, it will be placed into segment 3 or 4 of the NHS Oversight Framework. This consists of enhanced direct oversight by NHS England and in the case of individual trusts, this will be in partnership with the relevant ICB.

## ■ Mental Health: Children

**Anthony Mangnall:** [\[87992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to provide support for children's mental health in rural communities.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for ensuring appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of local populations. Adjustments are made in the core ICB allocations formula to allow for variation in the costs of providing health care between rural and urban areas.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24. This increased investment will improve access to mental health services, including in rural communities. By 2023/24, a further 345,000 children and young people will be able to access National Health Service-funded mental health support. In 2021/22, we provided an additional £79 million to allow a further 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services and accelerate the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

These teams are now available for 26% of pupils and will increase to nearly 400 teams for approximately 35% of pupils by April 2023.

#### ■ **Midwives: Portsmouth South**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[84970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help support the (a) recruitment and (b) retention of midwives in Portsmouth South constituency.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England retains oversight of local workforce plans and is updated on vacancy rates. However, recruitment and retention is undertaken at trust level.

In 2022, an additional £127 million has been invested in the National Health Service maternity workforce and improving neonatal care, including in Portsmouth South. This is in addition to the £95 million invested in 2021 to fund a further 1,200 midwives and 100 consultant obstetricians. The NHS People Plan focuses on improving the retention of NHS staff by prioritising staff health and wellbeing. In 2022/23, £45 million has been allocated to support the continuation of 40 mental health hubs, the Professional Nurse Advocates programme and expanding the NHS Practitioner Health service.

#### ■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Staffordshire**

**Aaron Bell:**

[\[82484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of diagnosis rates for Motor Neurone Disease in (a) Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency and (b) North Staffordshire.

**Helen Whately:**

No specific assessment has been made.

#### ■ **NHS and Social Services: Staff**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[88778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Ministerial Commission to Health Education England in May 2021 on refreshing the long-term strategic framework for health and social care workforce planning, when the Government plans to publish the findings of the review.

**Will Quince:**

In July 2021, the Department commissioned Health Education England to review long term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce. To supplement this work, the Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan.

The Government has committed to publishing a comprehensive workforce plan in 2023, which will include independently verified forecasts for the number of doctors,

nurses and other professionals required, taking into account improvements in retention and productivity.

## ■ NHS Trusts: Integrated Care Systems

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[86532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of large trusts, including those providing mental health services, to deliver the priorities of different ICSs; and if he will encourage co-terminosity with ICSs to aid focus and delivery.

**Will Quince:**

The boundaries of integrated care systems were largely developed from pre-existing partnerships determined by local consent. The Health and Care Act 2022 provides for National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts to be formal partners of more than one integrated care board (ICB). The Integrated Care Boards (Nomination of Ordinary Members) Regulations 2022 set out the criteria for determination of ICB formal partners based on its importance to the Five Year Joint Forward Plan delivery and the level of services provided within the ICB area.

## ■ NHS: Drugs

**Emma Hardy:** [\[82419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the implications for his policies of concerns raised by the British Society for Rheumatology with the National Homecare Medicines Committee, National Clinical Homecare Association, Care Quality Commission and General Pharmaceutical Council on the safety of medicines homecare services.

**Emma Hardy:** [\[82420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the performance of homecare medicines services in NHS contracts and framework agreements.

**Emma Hardy:** [\[82421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the potential effect of wage demands on the homecare medications services.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is aware of the British Society for Rheumatology's concerns. Through the quality assurance and governance processes of the contracts for the 12 providers of homecare medicines service in England, there is a monthly assessment against key performance indicators (KPIs). This includes the monitoring of patients' adverse events, complaints and incidents and regular meetings with the National Homecare Medicines Committee and NHS England. Providers which do not meet the KPIs are held to account and action is taken to ensure that service levels are delivered according to the relevant quality and safety standards. NHS England has



confirmed it has seen evidence of wage increases contributing to the overall cost increases for this service.

## ■ **NHS: Portsmouth South**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[84962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial and (b) other steps her Department is taking to help tackle NHS workforce shortages in Portsmouth South constituency.

**Will Quince:**

The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan will consider the number of staff and the roles required and will set out the actions and reforms needed to improve workforce supply and retention, including in Portsmouth South.

## ■ **NHS: Staff**

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[85022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help improve (a) manageable caseloads, (b) number of working hours, (c) flexibility in working hours, (d) overtime arrangements and (e) other working conditions for NHS staff.

**Will Quince:**

Through the NHS People Plan and People Promise, we are improving the National Health Service as a place to work, reinforcing support for staff wellbeing, improving leadership and organisational culture and strengthening opportunities for flexible working, such as e-rostering systems.

The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan will consider the number of staff and the roles required and will set out the actions and reforms needed to improve workforce supply and retention. We are committed to delivering an additional 50,000 nurses to ensure a sustainable, long-term workforce supply.

Additionally, the Department is represented on the NHS Staff Council for Agenda for Change and at the Joint Negotiating Committees for medical staff, which are responsible for negotiating any changes to core terms and conditions of employment. The employment offer is continuously under development to ensure that staff are rewarded fairly and the NHS can attract and retain the staff it needs.

## ■ **NHS: Strikes**

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[82193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of NHS staff strikes on NHS waiting list backlogs.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is working with the National Health Service and trade unions to ensure there is minimal disruption to patient care and emergency services continue to operate as normal should any strike action take place. The NHS has existing plans in place to manage any disruption to waiting lists.

**■ Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital: Ambulance Services**

**Chloe Smith:** [\[86442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce (a) ambulance handover times and (b) ambulance service lost hours at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

**Chloe Smith:** [\[86443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce ambulance response times in (a) Norfolk and (b) England.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England has allocated an additional £150 million for the ambulance service in 2022/23, with £20 million to upgrade the ambulance fleet in each year to 2024/25, including in Norfolk.

The National Health Service will increase capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds to improve patient flow through hospital and reduce waiting times transferring ambulance patients to accident and emergency departments. This is in addition to a £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to support the National Discharge Taskforce to reduce delayed discharges to care settings, increase bed capacity and improve patient flow through hospital. NHS England is also providing targeted support to some hospitals facing the greatest delays in the handover of ambulance patients into the care of hospitals, to identify short and longer-term interventions to reduce delays.

**■ Nurses: Conditions of Employment and Pay**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[83773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Royal College of Nursing on pay and working conditions for nurses.

**Will Quince:**

My Rt hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care met with Pat Cullen, the General Secretary and Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) on 10 November and he met with representatives of the RCN on 15 November. I met with RCN representatives on 7 November.

## ■ Nurses: Pay

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[88839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact of inflation on the average salary of nurses in cash terms between November 2021 and November 2022.

**Will Quince:**

The pay review body process is the established mechanism for determining pay uplifts in the public sector, outside of negotiating multi-year pay and contract reform deals.

Data on the average salary of nurses is not available for November 2022. The latest data available is for 12 months to June 2022. Table 1 shows that in the 12 months to June 2022 average basic pay per FTE increased by 4.3% compared with the previous 12 months while prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index increased by 9.4% over the same period. This data is using basic pay and does not include premiums or allowances such as unsociable hours or High Cost Area Supplements (HCAS). More on this data can be found at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-staff-earnings-estimates/june-2022-provisional-statistics>.

This does not include the 22/23 pay award. Nurses on the Agenda for Change pay scale received at least a £1,400 increase in basic pay (pro-rated for those working part time), with some nurses receiving up to £1,833.

Table 1: average nursing salary and inflation (CPI) from June 2021 to June 2022

	12 MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE 2021	12 MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE 2022	% CHANGE
Mean annual basic pay per FTE	34,371	35,841	+4.3%
CPI index (12 months to Jun)	111.3	121.8	+9.4%
CPI index (average for 12 months to Jun)	109.5	115.8	+5.8%

## ■ Paediatrics: Intensive Care

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[88838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many paediatric intensive care units in England are fully staffed to clinical standards.

**Will Quince:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

**■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Services****Dame Diana Johnson:****[84830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to increase the number of NHS staff providing Parkinson's care in (a) the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System area and (b) England.

**Will Quince:**

Individual National Health Service employers are responsible for planning local staffing levels in line with service priorities, including providing care to people living with Parkinson's disease.

A Parkinson's Disease Hub has been established in Hull, supported by a specialist nurse, physiotherapist and multidisciplinary team co-ordinator with regular meetings and educational talks with healthcare professionals to improve knowledge and confidence in supporting people living with Parkinson's disease. The Chair of NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and representatives of Parkinson's UK are scheduled to meet by the end of the year to discuss approaches to Parkinson's care in the region.

We have also expanded the number of postgraduate neurology training posts in England by 10 from August 2022 and since September 2020, provided all eligible students with a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year.

**■ Pharmacy****Alexander Stafford:****[85059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report Transforming NHS Pharmacy Aseptic Services in England published in October 2020, what progress he has made in implementing the recommendations of that report.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England has established the Infusions and Special Medicines Programme to deliver the recommendations of the report. From 2022 to 2025, £75 million has been allocated for the development of National Health Service aseptic compounding hubs, which will increase capacity. These hubs will become fully operational within two to three years.

**Alexander Stafford:****[85060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many aseptic hub sites there are in England.

**Will Quince:**

There are five proposed aseptic hubs in England.

## ■ Pharmacy: Standards

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[85061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the level of (a) production and (b) capacity is of aseptic services in England.

**Will Quince:**

The production of aseptically compounded medicines for the National Health Service in England is approximately equal between NHS and commercial suppliers. In 2019/20, approximately 4.5 million doses of compounded medicines were prepared in NHS facilities in England. However, information on the total capacity is not held centrally.

## ■ Pregnancy: Clinical Trials

**Feryal Clark:** [\[85034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to help ensure that pregnant women are included in clinical trials of new medicines that could be used in pregnancy.

**Feryal Clark:** [\[85038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Mothers and Babies: Reducing Risk through Audits and Confidential Enquiries report, entitled Missing Voices, published in 2022, what steps he is taking to help ensure that pregnant women are included in the clinical trials of medicines that could be used to treat pre-eclampsia.

**Will Quince:**

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Its 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027' sets out how the NIHR will become a more inclusive funder of research and widen access to participation in clinical trials. The Strategy has been designed to address inequalities associated with the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, which include pregnancy and maternity. The NIHR has published guidance from the INCLUDE project, which aims to improve the inclusion of under-served groups, such as pregnant women. The NIHR has commissioned research into maternal and neonatal health, focusing on the safety of maternity services for women and babies. Later this year, we will also host a discussion with researchers, led by the Chief Scientific Adviser, to address the under-representation of women in research, including pregnant women.

## ■ Psychiatry: Cornwall

**Cherilyn Mackrory:** [\[89026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the number of hospital beds for psychiatric care in Cornwall.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board is supporting Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to optimise the use of current bed capacity and re-open those beds which are not operational.

Local commissioners work in collaboration with service providers to expand and enhance community and crisis alternatives to reduce the number of people requiring an inpatient treatment and provide earlier intervention and prevention locally.

**■ Speech and Language Therapy: Children****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[86415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to improve access to auditory verbal therapy for children.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Hearing services are commissioned locally based on the needs of the local population. 'Commissioning Services for People with Hearing Loss: A Framework for Clinical Commissioning Groups' was published in July 2016. This Framework supports integrated care boards in England to provide consistent, high quality, integrated care and addresses inequalities in access and outcomes between hearing services.

**■ Suicide: Veterans****Fleur Anderson:**[\[88012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to help prevent suicide among veterans.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Veterans can access bespoke mental health support through Op COURAGE, which provides personalised care plans and access to support and treatment out of hours. Op COURAGE includes the High Intensity Service for veterans in mental health crises, including those at risk of suicide. As of 31 August, Op COURAGE has received over 24,000 referrals.

Additionally, NHS England and the Ministry of Defence have commissioned a review of research by Manchester University on suicide prevention, which will inform further options to prevent suicide among veterans. The study will investigate age-specific rates of suicide in veterans; identify risk factors and characteristics among veterans; and describe trends in suicide rates in veterans. The final report will be submitted in March 2023. Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing an additional £57 million in suicide prevention by 2023/24, which will support local suicide prevention plans and the development of suicide bereavement services, including for veterans.

**■ Surgery: Portsmouth South****Stephen Morgan:** [\[84981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of cancelled operations in Portsmouth South constituency in the last 12 months.

**Will Quince:**

This information is not collected in the format requested.

**■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus****Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[88799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November to Question 73787 on Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus, how many requests for medical records relating to claimants for vaccine damage payments have been outstanding for more than (a) one month and (b) six months; and if he will make it his policy that such requests be complied with as if they were subject access requests.

**Maria Caulfield:**

As of 8 November 2022, there were 755 claims awaiting the provision of medical records for at least one month. Of these, 157 claims were awaiting records for over six months. The NHS Business Services Authority can submit subject access requests to healthcare providers after a specific period, unless there has been an agreement for a timeline for the provision of records.

**■ Visual Impairment: Research****Paul Girvan:** [\[84951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps with Cabinet colleagues to help support sight loss research in Northern Ireland.

**Will Quince:**

Sight loss research undertaken in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[86454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic benefits of additional funding in sight loss research.

**Will Quince:**

No specific assessment has been made. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including sight loss research, although it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to



patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. In the last five years, the NIHR has invested more than £100 million for eye conditions research, including studies which focus on sight loss.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[84865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to expand (a) number of workers on and (b) the scope of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[84866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to set up a dedicated poultry workers visa scheme.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government expanded the Seasonal Worker route to include the poultry sector on 18 October. This enables workers to come to the UK in the run up to Christmas to support the sector during the busy festive period.

The route has been extended until 2024, with 40,000 visas available for 2022, consisting of 38,000 for horticulture and 2,000 for the poultry sector. This will support our farmers as they adapt to changes in the UK labour market. The Government is keeping the position under close review.

Many roles in the poultry sector can also be recruited through the Skilled Worker route.

### ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Brendan O'Hara:** [\[88898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Hazara Muslims have (a) applied for asylum in the UK, (b) been granted asylum in the UK and (c) reached the UK after being granted asylum through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

**Brendan O'Hara:** [\[88899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there has been an increase in the number of Afghan citizens claiming asylum in the UK since August 2021.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications and initial decisions on asylum applications from Afghan nationals can be found in tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest data relate to the year ending June 2022. Data for the year ending September 2022 will be published on 24

November 2022. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [‘Research and statistics calendar’](#).

The Home Office does not publish data on ethnicity or religion of asylum applicants.

### ■ Asylum: Domestic Abuse

**Stephen Farry:** [\[83795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of times an asylum seeker who is a victim of domestic violence has lost access to financial support when the abusive partner, as the main applicant on their asylum claim, was moved from their shared premises in the latest period for which data is available; and if her Department will take steps to tackle this issue.

**Robert Jenrick:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* We do not hold this information in a reportable format and could only provide it by doing a manual trawl of records which could only be done at disproportionate cost.

### ■ Asylum: Employment

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[84919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the employment opportunities open to people seeking asylum.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[84920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the one year limit for people seeking asylum being eligible to work.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Asylum seekers are allowed to work in the UK if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). A review into the policy was completed last year and the findings were announced on 8 December 2021. We have decided to retain our policy with no further changes.

### ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Stephen Kinnoch:** [\[88894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what contractual obligations hotels providing contingency accommodation for asylum seekers are under; and whether these obligations ensure unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not go missing.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers in our care is of paramount importance to the Home Office. We expect high standards from all of our providers, and we have a robust governance framework in place to manage service delivery of the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC). Details of the AASC can be found at:

[New asylum accommodation contracts awarded - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)(opens in a new tab)

We have safeguarding procedures in place to ensure all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in hotels are as safe and supported as possible whilst we seek urgent placements with a local authority. Young people are supported by team leaders and support workers who are on site 24 hours a day. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of social workers and nurses. Staff, including contractors, receive a number of briefings and guidance on how to safeguard children.

## ■ Asylum: LGBT+ People

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

[\[82157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the application of the new asylum assessment rules under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

This Government is committed to advancing the rights of individuals who are LGBT. The welfare and dignity of all claimants, including those who are LGBT, remains central to our decision-making processes.

One of the key objectives of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 is to increase the fairness and efficacy of our asylum system so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum. In September 2021, we published an Equality Impact Assessment for the policies being taken forward through the then Bill which included an assessment on potential impacts on people who may face persecution because of the protected characteristics of sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

## ■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[84914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made with Cabinet colleagues of the cost to local authorities of providing (a) initial and (b) contingency accommodation to asylum seekers; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the funding provided to local authorities reflects this.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[84916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an estimate of the cost to (a) local authorities, (b) schools and (c) health services of hosting each (i) adult and (ii) child in (1) contingency accommodation and (2) initial accommodation.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Local authorities are key partners in enabling us to procure sufficient accommodation to end the use of hotel contingency.

All local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales became an asylum dispersal area by default on 13 April 2022. This shift to 'Full Dispersal' will increase the number of suitable properties that can be procured for destitute asylum seekers.

The changes to asylum dispersal have been backed by extra government funding. More than £21million in un-ringfenced grant funding has been committed to make sure eligible LAs can provide wraparound support locally.

Our accommodation providers are experienced and have all the required policies and procedures in place around security, safeguarding, critical incident management and health and safety. We have also recently invested in ensuring these checks consider mental and wellbeing aspects of service users, and we are committed to working with all relevant providers to improve and build on the high service standards we expect.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[88041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were housed in (a) Luton, (b) the East of England, (c) Norfolk, (d) Suffolk and (e) Cambridge in each month in 2022.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[88042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is providing additional resources to Luton Borough Council to support the housing of asylum seekers.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation and other support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their application for asylum is being considered.

The Full Dispersal model, announced on 13 April 2022 is supported by £21million of grant funding to ensure eligible Local Authorities can provide wraparound support locally. Local authorities will also receive £3,500 for each new dispersal accommodation bed space in the 22/23 financial year.

Our accommodation providers have a robust delivery model in place, maximising the use of on-site facilities for recreation, and pastoral care to minimise impact on the local community. Security and support staff are on site 24 hours a day and providers liaise closely with local police to ensure the safety of vulnerable residents and to mitigate any risks to them and the wider community.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 25 August 2022. The next quarterly figures are due to be released later this month.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[88973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) adults and (b) children have been housed in temporary asylum accommodation in Wales in each month in 2022.

**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[88974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much additional funding the Government has provided to (a) local authorities and (b) support services for the operation of contingency asylum accommodation in Wales.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Due to the continuing unprecedented high volume of small boats arrivals and the historical pressure from COVID-19 measures on the asylum system it has been necessary to continue to use hotels to accommodate some asylum seekers to meet our immediate statutory need.

Hotel occupancy levels vary daily. The total number of people housed in temporary asylum accommodation in any one month is not recorded and to provide this information could only be done at disproportionate cost. Statistics relating to supported asylum seekers residing in temporary asylum accommodation are published as Immigration Statistics under the S98 population tables. These statistics can be found at [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#).

**■ Detention Centres: Manston****Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[87793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2022 to Question 77331 on Detention Centres: Manston, what (a) qualifies as an exceptional circumstance and (b) is the maximum period of time she can extend the detention of a person in a holding room for.

**Robert Jenrick:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* As set out in the published guidance on the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, it is not possible to give an exhaustive definition of exceptional circumstances. These would be circumstances which the Secretary of State (or those exercising the decision on her behalf) reasonably considers to be exceptional.

No maximum extension period is set out in the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, or guidance.

**■ Hate Crime****Peter Gibson:** [\[87989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations made by the Law Commission in its report on Hate crime laws, published on 6 December 2021.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Government is considering the Law Commission's proposals carefully and will respond to the recommendations shortly.

**■ Home Office: Civil Servants****Philip Davies:****[84845]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Chris Philp:**

Home Office staff data can only be obtained via information retained as of the last day of the month.

Information on the latest Home Office staff data will be published on 30<sup>th</sup> November and for b) dated 31 January 2020 is published here. [Workforce management information, 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/workforce-management-information)

**■ Immigration: ICT****Sir Stephen Timms:****[87716]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date the Atlas casework system to become operational.

**Robert Jenrick:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* The new Atlas caseworking system is replacing the existing CID (Casework Information Database) caseworking system used in UK immigration operations. It is already operational, and processing live cases/applications, across all three main areas: Immigration Enforcement, Border Force and Visas, Status & Information. Live applications from overseas under the Future Borders Immigration System routes, such as Work, Study and British National Overseas (Hong Kong), have also been processed within Atlas since late 2020.

**■ Migrant Help: Members****Simon Lightwood:****[82501]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, where Migrant Help are contracted by her Department to provide assistance to those seeking asylum, what steps her Department is taking to ensure hon. Members receive prompt responses to constituent queries in relation to that service.

**Simon Lightwood:****[82502]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the contract his Department awarded to Migrant Help to provide assistance to those seeking asylum, (a) how many cases have been referred to Migrant Help by the Home Office, and (b) how many replies have been received from Migrant Help within the target response time.

**Robert Jenrick:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* The Home Office introduced the Advice Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service, as operated by Migrant Help, to provide an independent resource for asylum seekers to request help, report issues and property defects, provide feedback or make complaints.

Asylum seekers are able to contact Migrant Help 24/7 by telephone, webchat or email, and there are strict service level agreements in place to resolving contacts, dependent on issue type. The contract has a range of Key Performance Indicators by which performance in all areas is reported on and monitored. Details of the AIRE contract is found at [AIRE - Advice Issue Reporting and Eligibility - Contracts Finder](#).

As Migrant Help provide a range of services via multiple channels to a large cohort, to provide the information requested could only be done at a disproportionate cost.

**■ Migrant Workers****Owen Thompson:****[88947]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to help reduce the up-front costs for (a) researchers and (b) innovators moving to work in the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government is improving its visa offer for overseas nationals coming here to work in research and innovation roles, and a number of visa routes are available for that purpose. We are removing the £50,000 minimum investment funds requirement for the Innovator route and exempting recruits under the new Scale-up route from the Immigration Skills Charge. We have increased the non-sponsorship options for the exceptionally qualified, including the Global Talent and the High Potential Individual routes. There are also other options to support temporary research mobility, including research-related permitted activities under the Visitor route and arrangements for temporary research assignments under the Government Authorised Exchange route.

Visa fees are set taking account of the charging powers provided by Section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which include the ability to set fees based on the cost of processing the application, the benefits provided by a successful application and the wider cost of the Migration and Borders system. Full details are available via the following link - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>.

**■ Refugees: Ukraine****Chris Stephens:****[88915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Ukrainian refugees are awaiting biometric residence permits (a) in the UK, (b) in Scotland and (c) on the MS Ambition in Glasgow as of 16 November 2022; and for what reasons there have been delays in processing those permits.



**Robert Jenrick:**

The information is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

The waiting times for biometric residence permits (BRPs) are dictated by the BRP production and delivery processes. We aim to deliver a BRP within 7 working days of the immigration decision.

**■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****Mark Logan:****[85031]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken with international partners to help reduce the number of migrant crossings across the English Channel.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Migrant crossings across the Channel are dangerous and unnecessary. This Government is determined to put the people smugglers out of business and make this route unviable.

We have agreed to a new joint strategy and operational plan with our French counterparts, for which the UK will provide up to €72.2 million this year, to drive forward our next phase of cooperation to tackle this issue. This will increase the number of French Officers with UK Officers being embedded

with French counterparts. Our partnership with the French saw more than 23,000 crossings stopped in 2021 and has seen over 30,000 illegal crossings stopped so far this year.

As a Government, we have also introduced tough new penalties through the Nationality and Borders Act which introduces life sentences for those who facilitate illegal entry. Additionally, we have agreed a ground-breaking partnership with Rwanda, and we remain committed to operationalising the scheme as soon as possible.

We are committed to engaging with international partners, in particular Member States and the EU, on a 'whole of route' approach to addressing the challenges of, and risks posed by, irregular migration, including through an early meeting convening our near neighbours.

**■ Visas: Married People****David Warburton:****[84932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her department is taking to expedite the processing of out-of-country spouse visa applications.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine Visa Schemes applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As

such earlier this year the service standard was changed from 60-days to 120-days as a direct result.

In exceptional circumstances, requests to expedite UK Family Visa applications are considered on a case-by-case basis and take a range of factors into consideration.

The bulk of resource has now returned to the route, along with an additional investment of new staff.

We are keeping the service standard level under review.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Aluminium: China

**Wayne David:**

[\[87758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has had recent discussions with the Trade Remedies Authority on the potential impact that the ending of anti-dumping duties on Chinese aluminium will have on UK manufacturers.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Department for International Trade's Ministers and officials meet with the Trade Remedies Authority regularly to understand on-going trade remedy cases and related issues, including this one. Ministers consider all recommendations from the Trade Remedies Authority carefully before making a decision, including the assessment of whether it is in the UK's economic interest to have a trade remedies measure in place.

### ■ Department for International Trade: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:**

[\[84838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

a) As of 31 October 2022 (the latest payroll figure for 15 November 2022), Department for International Trade (DIT) employed 3,481 Civil Servants. 3,302 Civil Servants in the UK and 179 overseas UK based staff working on DIT objectives. In addition, UK Export Finance employed 515 staff.

b) As of 31 January 2020 (for 1 February 2020), Department for International Trade employed 2,229 Civil Servants. 2,077 Civil Servants in the UK and 152 overseas UK based staff working on DIT objectives. In addition, UK Export Finance employed 337 staff.

## ■ Department for International Trade: USA

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[86510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the answer given in written question UIN 67063, does the spend on flights and accommodation includes the costs arising from the Secretary of State's visit to New York on 28 and 29 September.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

I can confirm the figure specified in our response to written question UIN 67063 includes the costs arising from the Secretary of State's visit to New York on 28 and 29 September 2022.

## ■ Foreign investment in UK: USA

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[87799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her speech on 14 November 2022 to the Cato Institute in Washington DC, what was the source for her statement that the current amount of investment by US businesses into the UK economy is higher than the annual gross domestic product of Sweden.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

*[Holding answer 18 November 2022]:* Latest statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that the level of Inward FDI stock in the UK from the United States at the end of 2020 was £479.2 billion.

Source: [ONS foreign direct investment involving UK companies 2020 \(directional\): inward](#)

Latest statistics from the International Monetary Fund show that the gross domestic product of Sweden (in US dollars current prices) for the same year was \$547.1 billion. Using the Bank of England average spot exchange rate for 2020 this converts to £426.2 billion.

Sources: [IMF World Economic Outlook Database: October 2022](#) and [Bank of England spot exchange rates](#)

## ■ Trade Promotion

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[87984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many overseas visits the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys have made in an official capacity in each of the last 10 years.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[87985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much the Government has spent on travel by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys in each of the last 10 years.

**Ruth Jones:**[\[87986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much from the public purse has been spent on hotel accommodation overseas for the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys in each of the last five years.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The table below provides the number of international visits each year made by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys over each the last 10 years and travel costs (including UK travel). Along with hotel costs each year over the last 5 years

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITS	TRAVEL COSTS	HOTEL COSTS (FROM 2018-19 ONLY)
2012/13	0	£0.00	NA
2013/14	16	£55,741	NA
2014/15	46	£116,541	NA
2015/16	29	£68,717	NA
2016/17	69	£202,771	N/A
2017/18	58	£154,067	£9816.00
2018/19	56	£149,548	£5919.00
2019/20	38	£104,848	£6820.00
2020/21	2	£739.00	£90.00
2021/22	18	£59,422	£4144.00
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>£912,394</b>	<b>£26,789</b>

■ **Trade Promotion: India**

**Navendu Mishra:**[\[86630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if the Government will appoint a trade envoy to the Republic of India.

**Andrew Bowie:**

India is a dynamic, fast-growing trade partner and negotiating a free trade agreement offers the opportunity to deepen our already strong relationship, which was worth £25.6 billion in 2021.

There are currently no plans to appoint a Trade Envoy to India, however, we regularly review countries and markets to identify where the appointment of a Trade Envoy can be of greatest benefit to the trade and investment aims of the UK, alongside the Department's other support for exporters and investors.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Criminal Records

**Wayne David:**

[\[87757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the system for sealing criminal records.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Government agrees with the conclusion of the 2017 Justice Select Committee report, 'Disclosure of youth criminal records', which found that, whilst there may be some merits in a mechanism whereby records could become 'sealed', this would create "unsustainable pressures" on the body responsible for deciding if a record should be sealed. As the report recommended, we are instead focused on using and reforming the existing automatic filtering system.

In November 2020, we implemented secondary legislation that changed the rules governing criminal records disclosure for those working with children, vulnerable adults or in a position of public trust, removing (for example) the requirement to disclose youth cautions. Further changes introduced by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act significantly reduce the length of time that someone needs to disclose their criminal record for custodial sentences of under four years and community sentences.

We believe that these reforms will continue to ensure we strike the right balance between public protection and ensuring that individuals, and in particular children, who committed minor offences can move on with their lives as quickly as possible.

### ■ Domestic Abuse: Homicide

**Rachel Maclean:**

[\[85001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he expects to publish the Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review by Clare Wade QC.

**Rachel Maclean:**

[\[85002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review.

**Edward Argar:**

Last year the government commissioned an independent expert, Clare Wade KC, to undertake a review of domestic homicide sentencing. The Terms of Reference stated that the review would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Justice by the end of 2021 and that we would then consider the review and its recommendations before determining whether further consultation is needed or publishing the report.

The independent reviewer required more time than anticipated to complete the review and it was delivered to the department in June this year. The Review examines a number of important and complex issues. Therefore prior to publication of the review

and response, the government is carefully considering its recommendations and next steps.

This government is fully committed to ensuring that the sentencing framework responds appropriately to cases of domestic homicide and that sentences reflect the severity of these crimes.

## ■ Julian Assange

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[89030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether (a) he or (b) officials in his Department have met with US officials to discuss the incarceration of Julian Assange.

**Mike Freer:**

The Government has discussed aspects of this matter as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US. Extradition cases are handled by the Home Office.

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[89031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether anyone employed by his Department was involved in Operation Pelican.

**Mike Freer:**

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Magistrates: Recruitment

**Alex Cunningham:** [\[87841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people applied to become magistrates following the recruitment campaign begun on 24 January; and what the (a) gender and (b) ethnicity breakdown is of those applicants.

**Mike Freer:**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, 4,321 individuals have applied to join the magistracy following the launch of the magistrate recruitment campaign on 17<sup>th</sup> January.

98% of applicants provided demographic data. Of this data, 53% were female, 46% were male. 1% selected one of the following options; other, prefer not to say, or unknown.

Of 4,321 applicants, 96% disclosed their ethnicity; of this 22% were from an ethnic minority background. Comparative data is unavailable as, as part of the recruitment campaign, a new Applicant Tracking System was introduced which has improved data collection.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:** [\[84847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Mike Freer:**

The Ministry of Justice's monthly workforce data is published here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-management-information-moj](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-management-information-moj)

We report as at the last day of the month so the nearest available date is 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 there were 76,441 payroll staff in post (headcount) in the Ministry of Justice and its executive agencies. The latest available data is for 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 when there were 88,713 payroll staff in post. Payroll staff are made up of frontline staff working in prisons, courts and in probation services as well as civil servants in HQ functions.

## ■ Prisoner Escapes

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[88985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 7 November to Question 74848, what the (a) conviction or (b) matter for which the prisoner was remanded into custody was for those prisoners at large.

**Damian Hinds:**

Data is available for those who were still at large having escaped from custody as of 1<sup>st</sup> May of each year. Across the five years 55 offenders escaped from custody.

Escapes from custody includes where an offender flees during a court appearance, when being escorted from court to prison and in extremely rare circumstances, directly from prison.

The vast majority were recaptured by police either immediately or within a matter of hours and there are no cases of prison escapees remaining at large. Offenders who break the law will be punished – including extra time in jail when appropriate.

Please see the below table for a breakdown of these figures by year and the offence type for both convicted prisoners and those remanded into custody.



	FINANCIAL YEAR				
	2017-2018-19 <sup>5</sup> 18 <sup>4</sup>	2019-20 <sup>6</sup>	2020-21 <sup>7</sup>	2021-22 <sup>8</sup>	
<b>Number of escapes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>
Of which, number still at large	0	0	3	1	5
<i>Number still at large by offence type<sup>3</sup> of prisoner:</i>					
Theft Offences	0	0	3	1	0
Public Order Offences	0	0	0	0	1
Miscellaneous Crimes against Society	0	0	0	0	2
Summary Non-Motoring	0	0	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1

SOURCE: HMPPS INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM

(1) A prisoner escapes when they are able to pass beyond the perimeter of a secure prison or the control of escorting staff. This may involve overcoming physical security restraints such as a wall or fence; locks, bolts or bars; a secure vehicle; handcuffs; or the direct supervision of escorting staff.

(2) Includes escapes from establishments, HMPPS escorts and contractor escorts

(3) Includes offence type for both conviction and for which the prisoner was remanded into custody if not yet sentenced

(4) Still at large as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018

(5) Still at large as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019

(6) Still at large as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020

(7) Still at large as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021

(8) Still at large as at 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022

## ■ Prisoners: Disability and Neurodiversity

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[86561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to train prison staff on the additional needs of prisoners with disabilities, including for neurodiverse prisoners.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[86562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to train prison staff on the additional needs of people in prison on remand with disabilities, including for neurodiverse people.

**Damian Hinds:**

On 30 June 2022, the Government published our Action Plan in response to the Evidence Review on Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System, setting set out a number of steps we are taking to increase support for neurodivergent people encountering the criminal justice system (CJS), including those on remand.

The action plan includes a number of steps specifically focused on training staff:

- we are on track to have a dedicated Neurodiversity Support Manager in every prison across England and Wales by March 2024. A key part of their role is to deliver awareness sessions to upskill staff, and to improve prisoners' access to education, skills and work;
- by the end of 2022, we will have developed and launched a National Neurodiversity Training Toolkit available for all prison and probation staff; and
- HM Prison and Probation Service has commissioned the organisation Skills for Justice to develop an 'Adult Health, Care and Wellbeing Core Capabilities Framework' for frontline staff, to set out what skills, knowledge and behaviour are required to support offenders with health requirements, including neurodivergent need.

## ■ Prisoners: Exercise

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[88992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hours prisoners spent on average out of their cells a day in each prison in the last 12 months.

**Damian Hinds:**

The information requested is not held by the Ministry of Justice as it would require the detailed monitoring of each wing in each prison establishment.

There is no central guidance which governs the amount of time that prisoners should spend out of their cells. Governors are instead afforded the flexibility to deliver balanced regimes that maintain an appropriate level of time out of cell on a range of activities, including association, which meet the needs of the establishment's population.

## ■ Prisons

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[88986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his Department's definition is of (a) full prison regime and (b) near full prison regime.

**Damian Hinds:**

Each prison has a Regime Management Plan, which sets out the activities that need to be provided for. A "full regime" – normally described as "Green" on the RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rating system – means that, as the prison is fully staffed on the given day, all planned activities can take place and the establishment is able to meet all the relevant expectations. A "near-full" (Green/Amber) regime means that while the full range of activities can be delivered, there may be some limitations attached to work with low priority.

How any resource shortage is managed is generally at the Governor's discretion: where necessary, the regime of activities may be curtailed in order to facilitate higher priority work. In all cases, the focus is on delivering consistent, safe, decent, secure and rehabilitative regimes.

## ■ Prisons: Rehabilitation

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[88987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of rehabilitative work in prisons post covid-19.

**Damian Hinds:**

We continue to deliver on the commitments in the Prison Strategy White Paper to reduce reoffending. This work includes investment in digital infrastructure, more training that delivers the skills employers need, more education experts to support Governors and improved support for prisoners with additional learning needs.

Since lifting the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services in May 2022, we are securing increasing numbers of learners back in the classroom and participating in rehabilitative activities. As set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we are committed to improving education in prisons and we are delivering a Prisoner Education Service to raise prisoners' levels of numeracy, literacy, skills and qualifications with the aim of helping them secure jobs upon release and drive down reoffending.

The numbers of places being offered on rehabilitative activity such as accredited programmes has increased throughout the prison estate as regimes allow and we are able to run larger groups. For this 2022-2023 delivery year, targets for the number of accredited programme places to be delivered is back up to 90% of pre-covid delivery levels. This is a significant improvement on delivery during covid in 2021-2022 where 1,848 people, around 35% of pre-covid levels, completed an accredited programme in prison.

Despite ongoing challenges, prisons have already achieved over 1,800 accredited programme completions this year to date. Additionally, there is ongoing engagement activity to support individuals into accredited programmes to improve uptake and completion rates. Other non-accredited activity, such as internally approved interventions provide additional support where there is no relevant accredited programme available.

## ■ Probate Service: Correspondence

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[86612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the average amount of time it takes for (a) a member of the public and (b) an MP to receive a response to a letter sent to the Probate Office.

**Mike Freer:**

HMCTS aims to close 90% of the complaints it receives, whether from a member of the public or a MP, within 10 working days.

## ■ Probate: Applications

**David Warburton:**

[\[84933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent progress his Department has made on reducing the time it takes to process probate applications.

**Mike Freer:**

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the probate service during the Covid 19 pandemic, and the increased volume of applications that have been seen since, the average length of time taken for a grant of probate following receipt of the documents required has been maintained at between five and seven weeks - with the average responses being almost 1 week faster in quarter 2 of 2022 than the yearly average for 2020 and 2021.

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

Average waiting times for probate grants, from April 2022 to June 2022, are published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 25):

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

Information covering up to September 2022 will be published on 15 December.

## ■ Repossession Orders

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[87935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of home repossessions in (a) Birmingham, (b) the West Midlands and (c) the UK since 1 January 2022.

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[87936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate has he made of the number of rental repossessions in Birmingham since 1 January 2022.

**Mike Freer:**

HMCTS publishes statistics on volumes of mortgage and landlord possession here - Mortgage and landlord possession statistics - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). The latest published statistics goes up to September 2022.

This data can be filtered by Court, Region, Local Authority using the Data Visualisation Tool - [Data visualisation tool - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

### ■ Repossession Orders: Mortgages

**Beth Winter:** [\[89063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many mortgage (a) claims, (b) orders, (c) warrants and (d) repossessions there were in each county court circuit in the last quarter for which figures are available.

**Beth Winter:** [\[89064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many landlord possession (a) claims, (b) orders, (c) warrants and (d) repossessions there were in each county court circuit in the last quarter for which figures are available.

**Mike Freer:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes statistics on volumes of mortgage and landlord possession claims, orders, warrants and repossessions [here](#) - Mortgage and landlord possession statistics - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). Court data can be found in the CSVs published alongside the statistics. The data in the latest publication goes up to September 2022.

This data can be filtered by Court, Region, Local Authority using the Data Visualisation Tool - [Data visualisation tool - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ Leader of the House: Redundancy Pay

**Christine Jardine:** [\[88998\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in her Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response from the Cabinet Office (82405).

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Andrea Leadsom:****[902303]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits for the levelling up agenda of implementing the recommendations of the (a) Early Years Healthy Development Review and (b) Vision for the Best Start for Life.

**Dehenna Davison:**

My Right Honourable friend is an extraordinary champion on these issues and has long campaigned for babies and children to get the best start in life. This government recognises the importance of the 1001 critical days.

Investing over £300 million to transform Start for Life and Family Hub services, in 75 local authorities in England, with high levels of deprivation, directly supports the levelling up agenda.

**■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Civil Servants****Philip Davies:****[84839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Dehenna Davison:**

DLUHC headcount is published each month at the following [link](#).

**■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Coronavirus****Philip Davies:****[83581]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many employees in his Department work on matters related to covid-19.

**Dehenna Davison:**

As of 17 November 2022, the Department has 39.7 FTE officials working on supporting the inquiry into Covid-19. Other officials may work on covid-related matters.

**■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Railways****Jon Trickett:****[61752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department spent on first class train travel for (a) ministers and (b) civil servants in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

**Lee Rowley:**

There are important official reasons for ministers and civil servants to travel across the country. Reflecting this department's responsibilities for local government,

housing, planning, and communities across England, and our wider responsibilities across the whole of the United Kingdom, our work inevitably involves staff travelling to different parts of the country.

Further to a written answer given by this department in 2015, in 2009-10 this department spent over £216,000 on first class rail travel.

A yearly breakdown of first class train travel spend is below. There will be business cases for such travel, including on occasion security, but we have significantly reduced costs compared to the last Labour Government. For example the 2022 level was well below 10% of the 2009-10 level in cash terms.

2020 - Civil Servants £9,735

2020 - Ministers £1,135

2021 - Civil Servants £4,731

2021 - Ministers £1,132

2022 - Civil Servants £12,135

2022 - Ministers £3,119

Figures are likely reduced in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since 2010, the Department has taken on responsibility for residual functions of the Government Offices for the Regions, and other agencies. As these business functions relate to work in areas outside London, this may have increased the business need for travel. Overall, we have still managed to reduce travel costs through better procurement and tighter management controls on costs, and reduced overall costs through closing unnecessary public bodies.

## ■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Redundancy

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[83558]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November to Question 77346 on Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Redundancy Pay, how many special advisers working in his Department had their employment terminated, after their appointing minister ceased to hold office, from 29 June to 9 November 2022; at what pay band each was employed; and whether each had been in post for (a) 0-3 months, (b) 3-6 months, (c) 6-12 months or (d) more than 12 months.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs, including pay bands, is published annually as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.



## ■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Redundancy Pay

**Christine Jardine:**

[86565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in his Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Details of such payments are published in departmental annual reports and accounts, and ministerial salaries are published [here](#).

## ■ Equality

**Chris Stephens:**

[902304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his levelling up policies in tackling inequality.

**Tony Lloyd:**

[902311]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent progress his Department has made on meeting the national levelling up missions.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The levelling up missions are central to the government's plan to tackle inequality across the UK. While these are long-term objectives for 2030, we are making early progress through rolling out gigabit broadband, introducing education investment areas, opening freeports, and devolving powers from Westminster.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill sets out proposals for an annual report on levelling up missions as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.

## ■ First Time Buyers

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[902306]

What steps he is taking to support first-time house buyers.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Getting people on the housing ladder realising their dream of owning a home has been a long held conservative value. I am proud that since Spring 2010, over 800,000 households have been helped to purchase a home through Government-backed schemes, including Right to Buy and shared ownership.

And the annual number of first-time buyers was at a 20-year high in 2021.

## ■ Fuel Poverty: Government Assistance

**Janet Daby:**

[86601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of warm spaces available in (a) Lewisham East constituency, (b) the London Borough of Lewisham and (c) the United Kingdom.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [86602](#) on 18 November 2022.

**■ Homelessness: Care Leavers****Paula Barker:****[85039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of care leavers were homeless, as of 10 November 2022.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The latest statutory homelessness statistics for England cover the period January-March 2022 and are available [here](#).

The published data shows that there were 900 care leavers aged 18-20, and 1,160 care leavers aged 21 and over who were threatened with homelessness or homeless in January-March 2022. This is 3% of all households owed a homelessness duty in that period. The department will publish the [Statutory Homelessness Statistics for April to June 2022](#) shortly.

The department collects data from local authorities that covers totals over a quarter.

Since 2018/19 the Department for Education has provided funding to local authorities with the highest number of care leavers at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy confirmed this investment will continue funding in 2022/23 to provide targeted support to young people leaving care most at risk of homelessness, in 69 local authorities.

**■ Homelessness: Temporary Accommodation****Thangam Debbonaire:****[84910]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will offer additional support to local authorities, in the context of trends in homelessness rates and number of households in temporary accommodation.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Local authorities have received £316 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2022/23. This is part of the £2 billion of funding committed to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years.

**■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Local Government Finance****Thangam Debbonaire:****[84908]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the costs of the Families for Ukraine scheme on the finances of local authorities.

**Felicity Buchan:**

There is no Families for Ukraine Scheme. There are two separate schemes – Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Scheme.

## ■ Housing First: Mental Health Services

**Paula Barker:**

[\[85045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Housing First Pilots at offering trauma related mental health support.

**Paula Barker:**

[\[85046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the provision of mental health to those (a) at risk of homelessness and (b) already homeless in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping.

**Felicity Buchan:**

My department has commissioned a comprehensive evaluation of the sub-regional Housing First pilots. Four reports have been published to date and are available [here](#).

We recognise the important role mental health can play in ending rough sleeping, and this is reflected in the content of our Rough Sleeping strategy. Our commitments to support people sleeping rough or experiencing homelessness span across health and social care systems, including hospital discharge, mental health and substance misuse.

## ■ Housing: Domestic Abuse

**Paula Barker:**

[\[85043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the availability of specialist accommodation for domestic abuse victims.

**Felicity Buchan:**

As part of the Part 4 accommodation-based support duties on local authorities in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, we initiated a National Expert Steering Group, chaired by a DLUHC Minister and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. This expert group monitors the delivery of the duty and provides advice and challenge on progress.

In addition, we are working with the Local Government Association, local authorities and domestic abuse service providers including Women's Aid and Refuge, looking at how the duties are being implemented at the local level. To support local authorities with the delivery of their duties we have run a number of joint workshops with the Local Government Association.

Under the new duties local authorities are required to report back to the Department on a yearly basis on how they have delivered their duties. We have committed to publishing progress reports, the first of which will be issued shortly.

**■ Housing: Older People****Ben Everitt:** [\[85048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Departments policy paper entitled Levelling Up the United Kingdom published on 2 February 2022, when he plans to launch the Task Force on Older People's Housing.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Ensuring older people have access to the right homes that suit their needs can help them to live independently for longer and feel more connected to their communities. Our Government is committed to further improving the diversity of housing options available to older people and boosting the supply of specialist elderly accommodation, including housing with care. The taskforce on older people's housing, which we announced in the Levelling Up White Paper will explore how we can improve the choice of and access to housing options for older people

Arrangements for the taskforce are still ongoing and further details will be released in due course. We continue to work in partnership with DHSC colleagues and with housing, health and social care stakeholders to look at how we can further support the growth of a thriving older people's housing sector.

**■ Leasehold: Reform****Stephen Morgan:** [\[84984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if it is his policy to bring forward reforms to leasehold in this Parliament.

**Lucy Frazer:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [75940](#), on 9 November 2022.

**■ Local Government: Inflation****Kerry McCarthy:** [\[902313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking help local authorities respond to the effects of increases in inflation.

**Lee Rowley:**

At the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced a substantial package of taxpayer support for local government, including new funding for adult social care. This follows a significant increase in funding for recent years, including an additional £3.7 billion in taxpayer subsidy via the 2022-23 local government finance settlement.

We are aware of the challenges of inflation within the local government sector and, along with the continued welcome transformation and efficient work that Councils are undertaking, we will continue to work closely with them on this issue.

## ■ **Park Homes: Fees and Charges**

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

**[84864]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to change the Park Home Pitch Fee Inflationary Index from RPI to CPI.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government recognises that park home residents are concerned about additional cost of living pressures. That is why we are supporting a Private Member's Bill by my Hon. Friend, the Member for Christchurch, to change the pitch fee review index from RPI to CPI.

## ■ **Planning: Reform**

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[73809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his Department's portfolio of major projects, how much public money has been spent on (a) internal staff costs and (b) external consultancy relating to delivery of the projects on (i) Planning Reform and (ii) Electoral Integrity from the outset of each project to the end of October 2022.

**Lee Rowley:**

*[Holding answer 2 November 2022]:* As regards the Planning Reform programme, contracts covering external consultancy are published on Contracts Finder and Digital Marketplace.

The DLUHC spend on external consultancy on the Electoral Integrity Programme, in the time since the Project transferred to DLUHC and October 2022 was £0.

Staff costs are met from within existing departmental budgets and the Department's workforce management information is published monthly [here](#).

## ■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[84803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department holds data on the number of section 21 no-fault evictions in Huddersfield constituency in the last 12 months.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Mortgage and Landlord Repossession Statistics data is not published at constituency level. The statistics are available [here](#).

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Standards

**Mary Robinson:** [\[902307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that private renters are provided an adequate standard of housing.

**Felicity Buchan:**

All tenants should have access to a good quality and safe home, which is why we have for the private rented sector strengthened councils' enforcement powers, introducing penalties of up to £30,000, extending rent repayment orders and introduced banning orders for the most serious and prolific offenders.

We published our white paper in June setting out plans to deliver a Fairer Private Rented Sector, raising the bar on quality. In September we consulted on the introduction of a Decent Home Standard in the private rented sector. The consultation closed on 14 October, and we are considering responses.

## ■ Rented Housing

**Dan Carden:** [\[89016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to introduce the Renters Reform Bill.

**Felicity Buchan:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [72234](#), on the 3 November 2022.

## ■ Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations

**Mohammad Yasin:** [\[79324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his planned timetable is for extending the right to buy to housing association tenants.

**Justin Madders:** [\[84901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the planned timetable is for the extension of the Right to Buy.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The Government is considering the next steps on the proposed extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants. We will work closely with the housing association sector on the approach to a new scheme and will announce more details in due course.

**Duncan Baker:** [\[902305\]](#)

What progress he has made on enabling housing association tenants to purchase their homes.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Our overall priority as a government is to ensure that more people become home owners, and more people live in secure and safe accommodation whatever their tenancy.

Right to Buy has helped over 2 million tenants buy homes since 1980. We will be working closely with the Housing Associating sector on the approach to these schemes and will announce any developments in due course.

**■ Sleeping Rough****Sir James Duddridge:**[\[902310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to help tackle rough sleeping.

**David Simmonds:**[\[902314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps his Department has taken to help tackle rough sleeping.

**Felicity Buchan:**

In September we published our 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' strategy, as part of our manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping within this parliament.

The Government will spend an unprecedented £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This will build on the success of Everyone In, which helped to protect thousands of vulnerable people during the pandemic.

This is in the context of significant economic challenges ahead and the Government is focused on getting the public finances on a sustainable footing whilst protecting the most vulnerable members in society.

**■ Social Rented Housing****Vicky Ford:**[\[902308\]](#)

What progress his Department has made on increasing the supply of social housing.

**Lucy Frazer:**

This Government understands the importance of social housing and are clear that more homes must be built.

Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will deliver tens of thousands of high-quality social homes right across the country, ensuring that hard working families and individuals can live in safety and security in the communities they call home.

**■ Students: Rents****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[84928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of introducing a cap on student rent on levels of student homelessness, in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.



**Felicity Buchan:**

Published homelessness statistics show that in 2021/22, 4,550 (1.6%) of main applicants assessed as being owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty had student or training as their employment status.

Many higher education providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance and £261 million of student premium funding is available this academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help.

We recognise the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year, however evidence suggests rent controls in the private rented sector do not work. They discourage investment and lead to declining property standards. Our White Paper sets out plans to deliver a fairer deal for private renters, including empowering them to challenge unjustified rent increases. We will bring forward legislation in this Parliament.

**■ Supported Housing**

**Paula Barker:** [\[85041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment has his Department made of the adequacy of exempt accommodation as of 10 November 2022.

**Paula Barker:** [\[85042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the report of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee entitled Exempt Accommodation published 27 October 2022, what steps his Department is taking to improve the quality of exempt accommodation.

**Felicity Buchan:**

The Government believes that it is unacceptable that unscrupulous landlords are profiting at the expense of vulnerable people in supported housing. We remain committed to addressing this issue - on Friday Government announced its support for Bob Blackman's Private Members Bill to regulate supported housing. I will be working closely with Bob Blackman MP on his Private Members' Bill to deliver tough new laws to end unscrupulous practices.

We welcome the publication of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee's report on the issue of poor-quality supported housing and we will carefully consider its findings and respond in due course.

**■ Urban Areas: Scotland**

**Owen Thompson:** [\[88945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of the UK's departure from the EU on the economic success of high streets in (a) Midlothian and (b) Scotland.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The economic performance of high streets continues to be a priority for this Government. We have announced a comprehensive funding package to reinvigorate high streets across the UK, including the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund and the £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which sees £3.5 million pounds allocated to Midlothian.

In addition, Midlothian forms part of the Edinburgh & Southeast Scotland City Region Deal in which the UK Government, along with Scottish Government, have invested £300 million pounds into projects expected to boost the economic success of the region as a whole. These funds will invest in innovation, skills and infrastructure to improve economic performance, and will help tackle inequality and deprivation.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Northern Ireland Office: Redundancy****Emily Thornberry:**[\[88845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 77348, how many special advisers working in his Department had their employment terminated after their appointing Minister ceased to hold office between 29 June and 9 November 2022.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

In line with the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and the Model Contract for Special Advisers, a Special Adviser's appointment automatically terminates following a change of Administration; when their appointing Minister leaves office; or in the event of a General Election. Under these circumstances, Special Advisers are contractually entitled to a severance payment.

The contract sets out that Special Advisers who are later re-appointed to Government must repay their severance pay, less the amount of salary that they would have been paid had they been employed during the period between their termination and their re-appointment.

The contracts of all Special Advisers in the Northern Ireland Office were automatically terminated on the change of Administration.

The contract also sets out that Special Advisers are entitled to receive three months' pay if termination occurs at any time during the first year of service, with an additional month's pay for each completed year of service after the first year, subject to an overall maximum of six months' pay. Where individuals were immediately re-appointed, severance was not payable.

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs, including pay bands, is published annually in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

**■ Northern Ireland Office: Redundancy Pay****Christine Jardine:** **[88996]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in his Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, eligible Ministers who leave office are entitled to a one-off payment equivalent to one quarter of their annual salary at the point at which they leave Government. This applies only where a Minister is under 65 and is not appointed to a ministerial office within three weeks of leaving government.

Individuals may waive the payment to which they are entitled. That is a matter for their personal discretion, but this approach has been taken in the past. Details of such payments are published in departmental annual reports and accounts, and ministerial salaries are published on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-salary-data>.

**■ Schools: Northern Ireland****Peter Kyle:** **[87925]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Answer of 7 November 2022 to Question 77502 on Schools: Northern Ireland, what estimate he has made of the number of young people who will be able to access the connected classroom programme.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

I am continuing to explore options for facilitating the establishment of a Connected Classroom programme, with the aim of providing young people in Northern Ireland with the opportunity to engage and collaborate with young people across the UK.

Therefore, I cannot make an estimate at this time of the number of young people who will be able to access the programme.

**■ Ulster Scots Language: Finance****Carla Lockhart:** **[85057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department plans to provide funding to the Ulster Scots language community.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

As part of New Decade, New Approach, the Government undertook to provide funding to address Northern Ireland's unique circumstances. In May 2021, the Government announced this funding would include £1 million for the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund, which the Government is proud to have delivered.

The Government is committed to supporting Northern Ireland's diversity of identities, languages and cultures, including the Ulster Scots. This commitment is also reflected in the Government's progression of legislation and in tandem the recent recognition

of Ulster Scots as a National Minority under the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Scotland Office: Redundancy Pay

**Christine Jardine:** [88995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in his Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, eligible Ministers who leave office are entitled to a one-off payment equivalent to one quarter of their annual salary at the point at which they leave Government. This applies only where a Minister is under 65 and is not appointed to a ministerial office within three weeks of leaving government.

Individuals may waive the payment to which they are entitled. That is a matter for their personal discretion, but this approach has been taken in the past. Details of such payments are published in departmental annual reports and accounts, and ministerial salaries are published on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-salary-data>

## TRANSPORT

### ■ A12

**Dr Dan Poulter:** [84869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has held discussions with the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy on the capacity of the A12 to accommodate potential construction traffic associated with the construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The A12 road at Sizewell is the responsibility of the local highway authority, Suffolk County Council, but where it reaches Lowestoft to the north and Ipswich to the south it becomes the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport and is managed on his behalf by National Highways.

The current Secretaries of State for Transport and for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have not held discussions about the traffic impact of Sizewell C, however, National Highways worked with the promoter of Sizewell C and Suffolk County Council on traffic impacts to the A12 during construction and operation of the power station .

A Statement of Common Ground between the promoter and National Highways was agreed as part of the planning process for Sizewell C and is available on the Planning Inspectorate's website.

Suffolk County Council has submitted an Outline Business Case to the Department for improvements to the A12 east of Ipswich which is on the Major Road Network. If approved, this will add the capacity needed on this part of the A12 to accommodate construction traffic for the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station as well as supporting other planned growth in the area.

## ■ **Bus Services: Franchises**

**Louise Haigh:** **[87905]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 83689 on Bus Services: Franchises, if he will make it his policy to launch a public consultation on the update to the bus franchising guidance.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

My department has already worked with or consulted local authorities developing a franchising assessment, as well as other stakeholders, to update the existing franchising guidance.

The revised guidance seeks to simplify and provide further clarity to the overall process.

## ■ **Buses: Procurement**

**Daisy Cooper:** **[86615]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his timeline is for completing the (a) order and (b) delivery of 4,000 new buses under the Bus Back Better scheme.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Across the country this Parliament, we have committed to funding 4,000 zero emission buses (ZEBs) this Parliament and the Spending Reviews in 2020 and 2021 provided over £525 million dedicated funding for ZEBs, through a number of funding schemes:

- The Government awarded £50 million of funding to the West Midlands Combined Authority to support the Coventry All Electric Bus City. This funding will support the introduction of up to 300 electric buses.
- £270 million funding was awarded through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) which will support up to 1,278 zero emission buses. In London, government funding has supported the introduction of an estimated 600 ZEBs.
- The Department will provide details on how future funding will be used shortly, taking into account the Chancellor's recent Autumn Statement. We will continue to explore how best to maximise the community benefits of future investment.

Funding from other funding schemes, such as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS), can also be used by local areas to support the introduction of ZEBs. In addition, the rate at which the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) can be claimed for ZEBs was increased from 6p to 22p per km in April 2022. This supports operators to introduce ZEBs by reducing the overall cost of ownership.

Table 1 below presents the estimated number of zero emission buses that have been funded in England since February 2020. Where available, information has been provided on the status of the buses and the name of the bus manufacturer has been included. The numbers in Table 1 are not official statistics: they are based on the latest information available and are therefore subject to change.

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>No. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
ZEBRA	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority	30	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Kent County Council	33	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Leicester City Council	96	6 buses on the road 68 buses ordered 22 buses funded	6 buses on the road supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong 68 buses ordered from Wrightbus Bus manufacturer for 22 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>NO. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
ZEBRA	Milton Keynes City Council	56	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Warrington Borough Council	120	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	South Yorkshire Combined Authority	27	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Norfolk County Council	15	Ordered	Wrightbus
ZEBRA	North Yorkshire County Council	39	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Portsmouth City Council & Hampshire County Council	34	Ordered	Wrightbus
ZEBRA	Blackpool Council	115	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of



<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>NO. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
				procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Nottingham City Council	78	12 ordered. 66 funded.	12 buses supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong. Bus manufacturer for 66 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	170	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Hertfordshire County Council	27	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	West Midlands Combined Authority	124	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>NO. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
ZEBRA	City of York Council	44	Ordered	Wrightbus
ZEBRA	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	111	32 buses ordered 79 buses funded.	32 buses ordered from Wrightbus Bus manufacturer for 79 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
ZEBRA	Oxfordshire County Council	159	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
All Electric Bus Town or City Scheme	West Midlands Combined Authority	Up to 300	130 buses ordered	130 buses ordered from Alexander Dennis Ltd
Transforming Cities Fund	Leicester City Council	18	18 buses on the road	Supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong
Transforming Cities Fund	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	20	Ordered	20 buses ordered from Alexander Dennis Ltd
Transforming Cities Fund	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	8	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>NO. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
				transport authority or bus operator.
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	50	Ordered	Alexander Dennis Ltd
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	Brighton & Hove Buses	20	Ordered	Wrightbus
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	First West Yorkshire	9	On the road	Supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	Go North East	9	On the road	Supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	Nottinghamshire County Council	4	On the road	Alexander Dennis Ltd
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	Stagecoach Manchester	32	On the road	Alexander Dennis Ltd
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	The Big Lemon	3	On the road	Supplied by Harris Group and manufactured by Higer
Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	5	On the road	Alexander Dennis Ltd
Local transport authority funding	Surrey County Council	34	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>FUNDING AWARDED TO</b>	<b>NO. BUSES</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>BUS MANUFACTURER</b>
				process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Local transport authority funding	Hertfordshire County Council	1	On the road	Switch Mobility
Local transport authority funding	Transport for London	600		
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,391</b>		

Table 2 below presents information on the estimated number of zero emission buses that have been funded in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since February 2020. The numbers in Table 2 are not official statistics: they are based on the latest information available and are therefore subject to change.

<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	<b>NUMBER OF BUSES</b>
UK Government funding for Wales through the Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	68
Welsh Government funding	16
Scottish Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme	272
Scottish Zero Emission Bus challenge fund	276
Northern Ireland Executive Funding FY 2020-21	100
Northern Ireland Executive Funding FY 2021-22	38
Northern Ireland Executive Funding FY 2022-23	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>870</b>

#### ■ Department for Transport: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:**

**[84840]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Huw Merriman:**

DfT's workforce data is regularly published in transparency releases and consolidated in end year accounts. The 2019/20 figure for permanently employed staff in the civil service employers of DfTc and Agencies was 13,902. The latest transparency release in August 2022 shows that the number of the workforce on payroll in these organisations was 15,436.

■ **Department for Transport: EU Law**

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[88848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on staff activity related to the review of retained EU laws within his Department's areas of responsibility since 1 September 2021; and what funding his Department has allocated for these purposes for the rest of the 2022-23 financial year.

**Huw Merriman:**

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Driving Tests**

**Catherine West:**[\[88978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of learners waiting for a practical driving test; and whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of measures taken to reduce the driving test backlog over the past 12 months.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has a 24 week forward booking window and driving tests are not available to book beyond this.

As of 17 November 2022, there were 550,331 car practical tests booked.

Since April 2021, the DVSA has created 595,000 extra car practical driving tests appointments, to help reduce waiting times, by:

<b>MEASURE INTRODUCED</b>	<b>NUMBER OF CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING SLOTS CREATED</b>
Recruiting new driving examiners	245,000
Conducting out of normal hours testing through overtime, including at weekends and on public holidays	165,000
Asking colleagues who are qualified to carry out driving tests, but do not do so as part of their normal duties, to do so	105,000

MEASURE INTRODUCED	NUMBER OF CAR PRACTICAL DRIVING SLOTS CREATED
Converting any unsold motorcycle tests and vocational tests to car tests 7 days before the test appointment	55,000
Buying back annual leave from driving examiners	20,000
Inviting recently retired driving examiners to return to work	6,500

The cumulative total of the measures introduced (in the table above) has reduced the length of time forecasted for the DVSA to recover its driving test service by 20 months.

#### ■ Driving: Qualifications

##### Louise Haigh:

[\[87895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average wait time was for each of the five tests which make up Driver Certificate of Professional Competence for bus drivers in each year from 2015 to date.

##### Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency cannot separate the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence waiting times data between bus tests and large goods vehicle tests.

The table below shows the official waiting times for DVSA booked tests from the date of booking to appointment; it does not include tests booked by external assessors for the vocational manoeuvres test.

DRIVER CPC TEST ELEMENT	AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.21 TO 31.03.22	AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.20 TO 31.03.21	AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.19 TO 31.03.20	AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.18 TO 31.03.19	AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.17 TO 31.03.18
Theory test	No data available	No data available	No data available	96.1% offered an appointment within 2 weeks	96.8% offered an appointment within 2 weeks
Case studies test	No data available	No data available	No data available	96.1% offered an appointment within 2 weeks	96.8% offered an appointment within 2 weeks

<b>DRIVER CPC TEST ELEMENT</b>	<b>AVERAGE WAITING TIME01.04.21 TO 31.03.22</b>	<b>AVERAGE WAITING TIME 01.04.20 TO 31.03.21</b>	<b>AVERAGE WAITING TIME01.04.19 TO 31.03.20</b>	<b>AVERAGE WAITING TIME01.04.18 TO 31.03.19</b>	<b>AVERAGE WAITING TIME01.04.17 TO 31.03.18</b>
Practical Driver CPC test	5.4 weeks	7.4 weeks	1.5 weeks	Not recorded	Not recorded
Vocational manoeuvres test	3.4 weeks	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available
Vocational driving test	5.4 weeks	6.6 weeks	3.0 weeks	1.7 weeks	1.6 weeks

To note:

- Data is unavailable for the Theory test and Case Studies test between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2022 as the pandemic was a force majeure event under the terms of the outsourced contract at the time.
- Waiting time data for the Practical Driver CPC test is not held prior to 1 April 2019.
- Data for the Vocational manoeuvres test is only available from the financial year 2021/22 as this was when it was introduced.

## ■ Hammersmith Bridge: Tolls

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[88004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of requiring a toll to use Hammersmith Bridge on levels of traffic in Putney.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The potential impact of any changes regarding Hammersmith Bridge will form a key part of the business case that the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is preparing for the next phase of work on Hammersmith Bridge, and I look forward to reviewing this once it has been submitted.

## ■ High Speed 2 Line: Costs

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[87769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on HS2; and what the projected cost of that project is.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department publishes 6 monthly Parliamentary reports on HS2, setting out total estimated cost ranges and progress updates on the project, the last of which was published last month.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[87770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of inflation on the cost of HS2.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department reports to parliament on the status of the programme every six months. The most recent report reflected the impact of high inflation, which has been prevalent across the whole economy and the construction sector which experienced 18% inflation from August 2021 to August 2022.

#### ■ **Motorways: Safety**

**Sarah Champion:** [\[88889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long it takes on average to (a) detect and (b) respond to a vehicle stranded in a live lane on all lane running motorways in England.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

National Highways detects around two thirds of stopped vehicles within 20 seconds and almost 90% within 60 seconds.

National Highways has also made considerable progress in attending incidents on all lane running motorways, especially where emergency areas are more than a mile apart. In September 2022 the average attendance time for these sections was 9 minutes 49 seconds. National Highways will continue to work hard to keep average attendance times to 10 minutes on these sections.

#### ■ **Railways: Finance**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[88943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the financial year baseline including non-governmental costs was for the Rail Transformation Programme in 2021-22.

**Huw Merriman:**

There was no baseline for the Rail Transformation Programme pre SR 21 (and therefore in financial year 2021-22). £38.2m was spent by the Department for Transport on the programme in 2021-22, this includes the first stage of the fares, ticketing and retail reform programme, including the expansion of digital tickets.

#### ■ **Railways: Midlands**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[88999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when a determination will be made on the Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub.

**Huw Merriman:**

We received the Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub on 14<sup>th</sup> November. We will consider it carefully and respond in due course.



**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[89000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) relevant stakeholders and (b) local leaders in the Midlands on the potential merits of constructing the Midlands Rail Hub for local residents.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport received the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Midlands Rail Hub on 14<sup>th</sup> November. The OBC was jointly developed by Midlands Connect, representing local stakeholders and leaders across the region, together with Network Rail. We will need to assess the OBC and will make announcements on how to proceed with the project in due course.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[89001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential economic benefits of building the Midlands Rail Hub.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport received the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Midlands Rail Hub on 14<sup>th</sup> November. We will need to assess the contribution of the scheme to the Government's objectives – including the potential economic benefits – alongside value for taxpayer money, and affordability .

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[89002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Midlands Rail Hub on rail usage in that region.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport received the Outline Business Case for Midlands Rail Hub on 14<sup>th</sup> November. We will need to assess the contribution of the scheme to forecast impacts on rail usage in the Midlands region, including taking account of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on changing travel demand.

**■ Railways: Overcrowding****Louise Haigh:** [\[88942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Rail passenger numbers and crowding on weekdays in major cities in England and Wales: 2021, published on 22 September 2022, when he plans to reintroduce the reporting of overcrowding and passenger standing measures, which were not detailed in that statistics release.

**Huw Merriman:**

The reporting of crowding and passenger standing measures were included within the set of tables published as part of 'Rail passenger numbers and crowding on weekdays in major cities in England and Wales: 2021' national statistics. This information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales-2021/rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales-2021>

Data tables RAI0212 and RAI0213 summarise the number of services with passengers in excess of capacity for regional cities and London stations respectively.

A discussion of crowding measures was omitted from the findings in the statistical release document as there was almost no crowding recorded during the observed period (Autumn 2021).

The content of future releases will be kept under review as passenger numbers recover following the pandemic.

### ■ Railways: Standards

**Louise Haigh:** **[88939]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many pre-planned service cancellations have been applied by each rail operator for services in 2022.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department does not hold the requested data on pre-planned cancellations by the train operating companies.

Rail operators are responsible for mitigating the effects of disruptive events, and for ensuring they are able to provide services within existing operational constraints. In some cases, operators may cancel services, or implement temporarily revised train timetables, to provide passengers with certainty so they can plan their journeys confidently.

### ■ Railways: Timber

**Sir Stephen Timms:** **[88783]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of how much Brazilian hardwood Network Rail has used for railway sleepers in each of the last five years.

**Huw Merriman:**

The amount of Brazilian Hardwood Network Rail has used for railway sleepers in each of the past three years is listed below. Network Rail do not hold the information for the years 18/19 and 17/18.

Hardwood timber sleepers and bearers originating from Brazil:

<b>CUBIC METRES</b>			
Year	Sleepers	Bearers	Total
19/20	1404	1422	2826
20/21	1506	2259	3765

**CUBIC METRES**

21/22	1670	2026	3696
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By way of context, below are the percentages of hardwood sleepers originating from Brazil purchased against all sleeper types (concrete, steel and timber):

19/20	20/21	21/22
3.1%	3.4%	3.5%

### ■ Shipping: Minimum Wage

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[88941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Nine-point plan for seafarers published on 6 July 2022, what progress he has made on the creation of minimum wage corridors with international partners.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Government has engaged with eight of our near European neighbours on how we can collaborate to improve seafarer welfare and to explore the creation of minimum wage equivalent corridors.

Discussions are ongoing with several countries and are being pursued as a matter of priority.

### ■ Southeastern Trains: Timetables

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[89070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 of Question 80960 on Southeastern Railway, for what reasons his Department agreed to grant Southeastern Railway a derogation from the requirement to consult on their December 2022 train timetable changes.

**Huw Merriman:**

Rail operators, including Southeastern, have been working at pace to respond to changing passenger travel patterns since the pandemic, as it is crucial that industry stays alert to fluctuations in demand whilst delivering good value for the taxpayer and responds accordingly. Therefore, the Department agreed to consider requests from operators for derogations against the requirement to formally consult on timetable changes throughout 2022. Subsequently, on 5 August 2022 the Department issued Southeastern with a formal derogation against the requirement to undertake a consultation exercise in respect of its December 2022 timetable changes.

**TREASURY****■ Cost of Living: Visual Impairment****Tim Farron:****[84850]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the additional costs associated with sight loss and the potential merits of providing targeted cost of living support to those affected.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises that the rising cost of living has presented additional financial challenges to many people, and especially to the most vulnerable members of society, such as people with sight loss. That is why the Government is taking decisive action to support households while ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced that it will provide a further Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 in 2023/24 to people in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is additional to the £150 payment for recipients of disability benefits in 2022 already announced as part of the Cost of Living package in May.

These payments can be received in addition to the other Cost of Living Payments for households on means-tested benefits, namely the £650 payment announced in May and the additional £900 payment announced at Autumn Statement. Individuals who have limited or no ability to work because of their disability or health condition, and are in receipt of means-tested benefits such as income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the Universal Credit Health top up, are eligible for this support.

People with sight loss will also benefit from other forms of non-means-tested support which the Government is providing to assist with household energy bills. We have taken decisive action to support millions of households with rising energy costs through the Energy Price Guarantee, which limits the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity.

This cost of living support is in addition to the existing specific financial support to help blind or partially sighted people. The Government provides the Blind Person's Allowance (BPA), an extra amount of tax-free allowance that can be added to an individual's Personal Allowance, to those who are blind or severely sight impaired. In 2022-23, the allowance is £2,600 and therefore worth £520 given the basic rate of 20%. If the recipient does not pay tax or earn enough to use their full BPA, the remainder of the allowance can be transferred to a spouse or civil partner.

## ■ Cryptocurrencies

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[89041\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential merits of establishing a cryptocurrency managed by the Government.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The UK, like many other countries globally, is actively exploring the potential role of a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). The Government and the Bank of England have not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a CBDC in the UK. The Government is engaging widely with a diverse range of stakeholders on the benefits, risks and practicalities of doing so. The Government has committed to publishing a joint consultation from HM Treasury and the Bank of England setting out their assessment of the case for a UK CBDC.

In April 2021 the Government announced a new joint HMT and Bank of England CBDC Taskforce to coordinate the exploration of a potential UK CBDC. This Taskforce ensures a strategic approach to CBDC work underpinned by effective coordination between UK authorities – including Government departments, financial regulators, HMT and the Bank of England.

In April 2021 the Treasury also announced a new stakeholder Engagement Forum and Technology Forum. These groups are engaging with a broad range of stakeholders and technology experts on various issues relating to the exploration of a possible UK CBDC, including on risks, benefits, and technical design. The Bank received diverse applications from across industry for membership of both of these groups, and final membership is public. The minutes have been published on the Bank of England Website.

## ■ Economic Growth: Brexit

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[86519\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the UK leaving the EU on the pace of economic growth.

**Andrew Griffith:**

It is for the Office for Budget Responsibility to provide economic and fiscal forecasts. It is too early to establish the overall effect of EU exit on the UK economy and economic growth. Global external factors, including Covid and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have made it challenging to assess the impact of EU exit and continue to add pressures to trade, prices and the wider economy. The IMF's recent forecasts project the UK economy to exhibit the strongest growth among G7 countries in 2022, and growth in 2023 is forecast to outpace France and Germany.

## ■ Economic Situation: Brexit

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[86518\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the UK leaving the EU (a) on the economy and (b) per household.

**Andrew Griffith:**

It is for the Office for Budget Responsibility to provide economic and fiscal forecasts. Global external factors, including Covid and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, continue to put pressures on the UK economy. It is challenging to definitively disentangle the effect of these global factors from the longer-term impacts of EU exit on the UK economy and households.

## ■ Income Tax

**John Cryer:** [\[84796\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional steps he has taken to restrict conversion of income into capital gains or corporation revenues following his announcement of the reversal in the top rate of income tax previously announcement in the fiscal statement of 23 September.

**Victoria Atkins:**

For individuals, it is the scope, rates and allowances of Capital Gains Tax that restrict the conversion of income into capital gains. At the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that the annual exempt amount will be cut to £6,000 for tax year 2023-24 and to £3,000 for subsequent years.

In relation to Corporation Tax, specific anti-avoidance rules apply where income is converted into capital gains in order to use losses.

## ■ Income Tax: Surcharges

**John Cryer:** [\[84793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will estimate the potential income that would have been generated for the Exchequer if an investment income surcharge of the form in existence until 1983 been in place in each year since 2010-11.

**John Cryer:** [\[84795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will estimate the income to the Exchequer in 2020-21 had an investment income surcharge of the forms in existence until 1983 been in place.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government has no current plans to reintroduce the investment income surcharge. As with all aspects of the tax system, the Government keeps tax reliefs under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken by the Chancellor in the context of the wider public finances.

## ■ Insurance: Cars

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[88856\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) regulators and (b) other relevant stakeholders on (i) the use of tracking apps by car insurance companies and (ii) ensuring that consumers are able to identify which products require the use of such apps when procuring car insurance products.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Insurers should treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules. The FCA is an independent body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry, including insurance.

The FCA requires that an insurer must give information to a consumer about the terms and conditions of insurance products in a comprehensible form to enable them to make an informed purchasing decision.

The Government regularly engages with both the FCA and insurance industry stakeholders.

## ■ Minimum Wage: Shipping

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[88940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether UK National Minimum Wage resource has been dedicated to the maritime sector.

**Victoria Atkins:**

All businesses, irrespective of size or business sector, are responsible for paying the correct minimum wage to their staff. HMRC does not stand for anyone failing to meet their obligation to pay at least the minimum wage.

As of March 2022 HMRC had 390 full time equivalent National Minimum Wage (NMW) officers in post. NMW officers work across all sectors in the UK, including the maritime sector, undertaking targeted activity where they identify a potential risk.

HMRC takes seriously and considers all complaints received, if anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact Acas, in confidence, on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query

online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>. HMRC also welcomes information from third parties, if any person or organisation has information about potential NMW breaches they can get in touch with us via GOV.UK by searching “pay and work rights complaints”.

## ■ Monetary Policy: Economic Situation

**Dan Carden:**

[\[86575\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will launch a review of the current macroeconomic and monetary policy frameworks.

**Andrew Griffith:**

At the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor confirmed new fiscal rules which will ensure the public finances are on a stable footing in the years to come. These are:

- to have public sector net debt (excluding the Bank of England) as a percentage of GDP falling by the fifth year of the rolling forecast period
- to ensure public sector net borrowing does not exceed 3 percent of GDP by the fifth year of the rolling forecast period

The Office for Budget Responsibility confirm we are on track to get debt falling by 2027-28 and meet all our fiscal rules.

He also issued his annual remit and recommendations letters to the Bank of England's independent Financial Policy Committee and Monetary Policy Committee.

The Chancellor reconfirmed his commitment to monetary policy independence and reaffirmed the remit of the MPC. The Chancellor also stated that this government will not change the definition of price stability from 2% CPI year on year.

**■ Money Laundering****John Cryer:****[84794]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many incidents potentially related to money laundering have (a) the Inland Revenue and (b) HM Customs and Excise reported to the appropriate investigative agencies in each year since 2010; and how many prosecutions resulted from these reports in each year.

**Andrew Griffith:**

HMRC do not record the requested data.

Information about HMRC's referrals of suspicious activity to the National Crime Agency, and how HMRC shares information with domestic law enforcement agencies, is set out in its annual anti-money laundering supervision self-assessment report, the latest of which is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hmrc-economic-crime-supervision-annual-assessment-report-2021-to-2022>.

HMRC also has a network of intelligence officers embedded with domestic partner agencies to assist with their operational work. 13 officers are embedded with police teams, including Regional Organised Crime Units, and 7 with other law enforcement agencies. In addition, 5 HMRC officers are seconded to the National Economic Crime Centre and 2 are embedded in the United Kingdom Financial Intelligence Unit.

If any referrals are adopted by these investigating agencies, it is a decision for them, in tandem with the relevant prosecuting authority to pursue a criminal prosecution for money laundering offences.

HMRC can and does investigate money laundering, linked to its assigned matters, as well as criminal breaches of the Money Laundering Regulations. Since 2011/12, HMRC opened 358 investigations involving money laundering or breaches of the



Money Laundering Regulations and 301 individuals have been prosecuted for either offence over the same period.

### ■ Money Laundering: Art Works

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[86503\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Government's policy is on the potential expansion of the definition of Art Market Participants within the Money Laundering Regulations to include (a) digital works of art, (b) Non-Fungible Tokens and (c) antiques and antiquities.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The review of the UK's Anti-Money Laundering regime, published by His Majesty's Treasury in June 2022, considered the best approach to amending the regulated sector subject to the Money Laundering Regulations. After reviewing consultation responses, the Government has committed to use the National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, as the central vehicle through which emerging risks are assessed and new sectors are considered for inclusion under the Money Laundering Regulations.

### ■ Money Laundering: Cryptoassets

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[86504\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) civil and (b) criminal penalties have been imposed by the Financial Conduct Authority on cryptoasset businesses for breaches of a relevant requirement under regulation 86 of the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, as amended, in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Legislation to bring certain cryptoasset activities into the UK Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regime came into effect in January 2020. To date 38 cryptoasset firms have been able to meet the registration criteria and have been registered to legally undertake crypto asset business in the UK. The FCA will continue to supervise them against the requirements in the Money Laundering Regulations.

The FCA has not taken enforcement action for breach of a relevant requirement under Regulation 86.

The FCA has used its supervisory tools under the MLRs, such as the Power of Direction (under Regulation 74C) in order to ensure firms reach the standards required under the MLRs.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[86505\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of businesses currently on the list of unregistered cryptoasset businesses maintained by the Financial Conduct Authority have been subject to (a) civil and (b) criminal penalties in relation to any failure to comply with the Money Laundering Regulations 2017 as amended.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Of the 214 firms on the FCA warning list of unregulated firms in January 2022, more than half ceased operating following the FCA's published warnings. The FCA will not hesitate to take action against any unregistered cryptoasset provider that is continuing to operate without registration, although their actions to date have meant they are making good progress in shutting down these firms without needing to commence protracted litigation.

The FCA will continue to warn consumers about cryptoasset firms they should stay clear of and will take action where there is evidence that cryptoasset firms are operating without being registered as required for the purposes of anti-money laundering.

**■ Tax Allowances: Workplace Pensions****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:****[88954]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of pension tax rules have on the (a) working hours and (b) levels of retirement of doctors in the NHS.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Pensions tax relief is one of the most expensive reliefs in the personal tax system. In 2020/21 Income Tax and employer National Insurance Contributions relief cost £67.3 billion. The annual and lifetime allowances help to ensure that the highest earning pension savers do not receive a disproportionate benefit. 99 per cent of pension savers make annual contributions below £40,000, the level of standard annual allowance, while 91 per cent of individuals currently approaching retirement have a pension below the lifetime allowance.

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 extending existing temporary measures to allow our most experienced staff to return to service or stay in service longer.

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Chancellor announced the Government will introduce measures to support and grow the NHS workforce and improve performance across the health system. To support this the government committed to publishing a

comprehensive NHS workforce strategy, including independently verified workforce forecasts, next year.

## ■ Taxation: Rebates

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[87731\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what safeguards his Department has implemented to ensure that companies who act as tax agents have the full and informed consent of the taxpayers on whose behalf they accept rebates; how many payments his Department has made in the last three months to Ensign Advisory Ltd; and whether companies acting as tax agents are authorised to deduct a fee from a rebate they receive before passing it on to the taxpayer on whose behalf they act.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Individuals can claim tax repayments from HMRC and HMRC will refund them directly. However, HMRC will issue a tax repayment to a third party when a taxpayer has either nominated or assigned the repayment to them.

Companies which specialize in claiming tax refunds often use assignments as part of the sign-up process, which means the repayment then legally belongs to that agent. When a taxpayer signs an assignment, HMRC is obliged to make payment directly to the repayment agent. Repayment agents may deduct a fee from the repayment before they forward the repayment to their client. This will be set out in their terms and conditions.

When a customer has used a repayment agent and has an assignment in place, HMRC completes essential checks to satisfy that the assignment is valid. HMRC takes firm action against any agent who does not comply with the law.

HMRC launched the “[Raising standards in tax advice: protecting customers claiming tax repayments](#)” consultation on 22 June 2022. The consultation sought views on restricting the use of assignments for tax repayments, and introducing measures designed to ensure taxpayers see material information about a repayment agent’s service before entering into a contractual agreement.

The consultation ran for 12 weeks and closed on 14 September 2022. We will publish a summary of responses in due course.

The Autumn Statement announced changes to Research & Development relief from 1 April 2023, reducing the risk of abuse. The new requirement for claimants to provide additional information with their claim includes providing details of any agent involved with the claim.

HMRC does not comment on identifiable businesses due to strict confidentiality rules.

## ■ Treasury: Civil Servants

**Philip Davies:**

[\[84844\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**James Cartlidge:**

The number of Civil Servants employed by HM Treasury as at the closest month end dates to those requested are:

DATE	PAID HEADCOUNT
31/01/2020	1601
31/10/2022	2080

National Statistics on Civil Service employment numbers, both overall and by department, are published each quarter by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as part of their Public Sector Employment statistical release.

The latest figures were published 13 September 2022 and showed the position as at 30 June 2022. The next figures will be published 13 December for the end of September position.

More timely workforce information is also published by departments in the interests of transparency on gov.uk each month. This monthly workforce management information (MWMI) includes additional breakdowns on department and agency employment numbers e.g. showing contingent labour, grade breakdowns and associated costs.

The department continued to grow throughout 2020-21, as work on planning the transition from our exit from the EU continued and the department responded to the COVID-19 crisis. In 2021-22 the Treasury continued to respond to COVID-19 and to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and took on new responsibilities such as the establishment of the UK Infrastructure Bank, as well as setting up the new economic campus in Darlington. The size of the Treasury's workforce in 2021- 22 remained broadly consistent with that of the previous year.

Treasury will meet its departmental Spending Review commitments, in doing this we will continue to seek opportunities for efficiencies, in line with the steer in the Autumn Statement.

■ **Treasury: EU Law**

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[88849\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much (a) his Department and (b) HMRC have spent on staff activity related to the review of retained EU laws within their areas of responsibility since 1 September 2021; and what funding they have allocated for these purposes for the rest of the 2022-23 financial year.

**John Glen:**

We can confirm that HM Treasury and HMRC do not hold this information.

HMT and HMRC hold a large body of Retained EU Law (REUL), primarily in relation to Financial Services and tax (including excise, customs and VAT). A number of

officials from both HMT and HMRC work on REUL legislation. This work is carried out as part of officials' normal business activities, and we do not record the amount of staff time spent specifically on this work or the funding required for it in a comprehensive manner.

## ■ VAT: Small Businesses

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[88919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the turnover threshold for small business VAT in the context of rising levels of inflation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government recognises that accounting for VAT can be a burden on small businesses. This is why, at £85,000, the UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU Member State and the second highest in the OECD. This keeps the majority of UK businesses out of VAT altogether.

Views on the VAT registration threshold are divided and the case for change has been regularly reviewed over the years. While some businesses have argued that a higher threshold would reduce administrative and financial burdens, others contend that a lower threshold would provide a fairer competitive environment.

In 2018, the Government consulted on how the design of the VAT registration threshold could better incentivise growth. However, there was no clear option for reform.

It was announced at Autumn Budget 2022 that the VAT threshold will be maintained at its current level of £85,000 until 31 March 2026.

## ■ Visual Impairment: Tax Allowances

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[80985\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people claim the Blind Person's Allowance as of 7 November 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Latest published projections estimate that there were 36,900 claimants of Blind Person's Allowance in 2021-22.

For more information, please refer to the annual 'Estimated cost of non-structural tax reliefs' publication, last published in December 2021. The most relevant information has been extracted into the table below.

These estimates are based on the 2018-19 Survey of Personal Incomes, projected using economic assumptions consistent with the Office for Budget Responsibility's October 2021 Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

NAME	TAX TYPE	DESCRIPTION	2021-22 COST	2021-22 NO. OF CLAIMANTS
Blind Person's Allowance	Income tax	For income tax purposes, people certified blind and on a local authority register of blind persons (where different rules apply for England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) can claim an additional personal allowance.	£20 million	36,900

## WALES

### ■ Wales Office: Redundancy

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[88844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 77341, how many special advisers working in his Department had their employment terminated after their appointing Minister ceased to hold office between 29 June and 9 November 2022.

**Dr James Davies:**

In line with the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and the Model Contract for Special Advisers, a Special Adviser's appointment automatically terminates following a change of Administration; when their appointing Minister leaves office; or in the event of a General Election. Under these circumstances, Special Advisers are contractually entitled to a severance payment.

The contract sets out that Special Advisers who are later re-appointed to Government must repay their severance pay, less the amount of salary that they would have been paid had they been employed during the period between their termination and their re-appointment.

The contracts of all Special Advisers in the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales were automatically terminated on the change of Administration.

The contract also sets out that Special Advisers are entitled to receive three months' pay if termination occurs at any time during the first year of service, with an additional month's pay for each completed year of service after the first year, subject to an overall maximum of six months' pay. Where individuals were immediately re-appointed, severance was not payable.

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs, including pay bands, is published annually in the Annual Report on Special Advisers as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

## ■ **Wales Office: Redundancy Pay**

**Christine Jardine:**

[88997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what the cost to the public purse has been of Ministerial severance pay in his Department in each year since 1 January 2016.

**Dr James Davies:**

Under the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, eligible Ministers who leave office are entitled to a one-off payment equivalent to one quarter of their annual salary at the point at which they leave Government. This applies only where a Minister is under 65 and is not appointed to a ministerial office within three weeks of leaving government. Individuals may waive the payment to which they are entitled. That is a matter for their personal discretion, but this approach has been taken in the past. Details of such payments are published in departmental annual reports and accounts, and ministerial salaries are published on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministerial-salary-data>

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Civil Servants**

**Philip Davies:**

[84841]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the civil service headcount for their Department was on (a) 15 November 2022 and (b) 1 February 2020.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP only reports month end figures, not mid-month figures. Both periods below are taken on the last day of the month to represent that period.

February 2020 – 78,418

October 2022 – 86,345

### ■ **Department for Work and Pensions: EU Law**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[88851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much his Department has spent on staff activity related to the review of retained EU laws within his Department's

areas of responsibility since 1 September 2021; and what funding his Department has allocated for these purposes for the rest of the 2022-23 financial year.

**Mims Davies:**

Information is not held centrally on the staff activity related to the review of retained EU law or the passage of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill in financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The Retained EU law dashboard was made by the Retained EU Law team, in conjunction with the Government Strategic Management Office and is hosted on Tableau Public, which is a free platform for hosting public dashboards. The dashboard has been updated at no additional cost.

■ **Employment and Support Allowance: Disability and Health**

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[88879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will provide a breakdown of what the £1.3 billion funding over three years in employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions will be spent on.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[88880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the £1.3 billion funding over three years in employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions will come entirely from his Department's budget.

**Tom Pursglove:**

This Government is committed to helping disabled people and people with health conditions start, stay, and succeed in work, by providing support to meet each individual's needs.

Approximately one third of the £1.3bn billion investment over three years is budgeted for Access to Work. A quarter of the funds go to support within Jobcentre Plus, including specialist Disability Employment Enabling Roles and increasing Work Coach support across England, Scotland and Wales for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance. A further quarter funds contracted and grant-funded employment support programmes. Approximately 15% funds the DWP contribution to joint work in partnership with the health system, including expanding employment support within NHS IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapy) services to the whole of England over this spending review period.

The figure of £1.3 billion investment over three years is calculated from DWP budgets following the 2021 Spending Review.

■ **Employment: Speech and Language Disorders**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[88777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Department's press release entitled £7.6 million to help 2,000 adults with autism into work, published on



18 August 2022, whether he plans to increase funding to help support adults with developmental language disorder into work.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The press release refers to our new Local Supported Employment (LSE) service, which aims to help people with learning difficulties and/or autism find and retain work. We are working with 29 local authorities across England and Wales to deliver LSE up until March 2025. Adults with developmental language disorder (DLD) living in those local authority areas will be able to benefit.

There are also other DWP services that can assist adults with DLD. Additional Work Coach support for health journey claimants is a new Work Coach led support offer, which aims to help more disabled people and claimants with a health condition into, and towards, work. This trial of additional Work Coach support is initially available across a third of Jobcentres in England, Scotland and Wales, with plans for the support to be rolled out wider from 2023.

Our Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) role delivers direct support to claimants who require additional work-related support and advice above our core Work Coach offer. DEAs continue to support all Work Coaches to deliver tailored, personalised support to all claimants with a disability or health condition.

Access to Work is a demand-led discretionary grant scheme that provides funding for the extra disability-related costs people have when starting work or maintaining employment, which go beyond the employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments. It can also support disabled people on an apprenticeship, traineeship, or Supported Internship.

People in particular disadvantaged groups continue to benefit from support through the increased Flexible Support Fund and priority early access to the Work and Health Programme. Intensive Personalised Employment Support provision provides highly personalised packages of employment support for disabled people who want to work but have complex needs or barriers and require specialist support to achieve sustained employment.

We are working with employers to encourage them to become Disability Confident. The Disability Confident scheme encourages employers to think differently about disability and health and to take positive action to address the issues disabled employees face in the workplace.

■ **FareShare: Finance**

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[85023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the proposed expansion of the FareShare Surplus with Purpose scheme.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department for Work and Pensions has no plans to make an assessment.

Surplus food distribution sits with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

### ■ **Housing Benefit: Cost of Living**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[83663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 10 October 2022 to Question 59849 Housing Benefit: Cost of Living, for what reasons his Department stated that spare room subsidy strengthens work incentives.

**Mims Davies:**

The removal of the spare room subsidy policy provides fairness for hard-working taxpaying households and encourages people to move into work, where possible. This aligns with the Governments long-term focus of continuing to support people into, and to progress in work.

This measure ensures that benefit claimants (in the same way as for those not claiming benefits) are expected to make choices about affordability and how they will fund the rent shortfall for property that is deemed larger than they need.

We recognise there may be circumstances where claimants need an additional room beyond the bedrooms allocated under the policy. For situations like this where claimants need further financial help with their housing costs, we provide funding to local authorities in the form of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). Since 2011, the Government has provided almost £1.5 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities. This is alongside the £421 million Household Support Fund which has been extended from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

### ■ **Impact Assessments: Disability**

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[87909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of levels of (a) public spending and (b) welfare payments on the (i) quality of life, (ii) mental wellbeing and (iii) physical wellbeing of disabled people.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government is providing extensive support to disabled people and those with a health condition to help them live independent lives. In 2022/23 we will spend over £64bn on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions in Great Britain: spending on main disability benefits – PIP, DLA and Attendance Allowance – will be over £6bn higher in real terms than it was in 2010.

In response to cost of living pressures, the Government has already paid out the £650 Cost of Living Payment to over 7 million low-income households and the £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment to 6 million people receiving eligible disability benefits. Pensioner households will also receive an additional £300 on their Winter Fuel Payment this winter. This is alongside the £400 non-repayable discount to

eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme in addition to the Energy Price Guarantee from now until April next year.

We have announced further cost of living support worth £26 billion in 2023-24, designed to target the most vulnerable households. In addition, benefits uprating is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities. This further cost of living support in 2023-24 includes:

- More than 8 million UK households on low-income benefits will receive an additional Cost of Living Payment of £900.
- Over 6 million people across the UK on eligible disability benefits will receive a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment to help with the additional costs they face. This is in addition to the Cost of Living Payments for households on means tested benefits and pensioner households, if eligible.
- More than 8 million pensioner households across the UK will receive an additional £300 Cost of Living Payment for pensioners to help with bills. This is in addition to the means tested benefit and disability payments, if eligible.
- We'll continue to provide support to all households through the Energy Price Guarantee, which caps the price you pay for each unit of energy. This will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

There is no recent assessment of the impact of public spending and welfare benefits on quality of life or mental and physical wellbeing of disabled people.

## ■ Pensions: Consumer Information

**Rob Roberts:**

**[88023]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on the implementation of pension dashboards.

**Laura Trott:**

The Government has made significant progress in implementing pensions dashboards, working in close collaboration with key delivery partners including the Pensions Dashboards Programme which is part of the Money and Pensions Service, the Pensions Regulator and the Financial Conduct Authority.

Following extensive consultation with industry and other interested parties, the Department laid the [draft Pensions Dashboards Regulations 2022](#), in Parliament on 17 October 2022. This was an important milestone, setting out detailed requirements for occupational pension schemes and for organisations seeking to provide a qualifying pensions dashboard service. The Regulations were subsequently approved in Parliament on 16 November 2022 and are due to come into force this winter. Alongside this, the Financial Conduct Authority intends to publish final rules for personal and stakeholder pensions shortly and The Pensions Regulator is providing support to help schemes meet their connection deadlines, including through guidance and writing to schemes at least 12 months ahead of their deadline.

The Pensions Dashboards Programme is responsible for delivering the digital architecture that will make dashboards work. They published their latest progress report on 26 October 2022 outlining key milestones and next steps, such as finalising a suite of operational and technical standards for dashboards. The Programme intends to consult on design standards this winter. The PDP has consulted on the data, technical, code of connection, and reporting standards relating to dashboards and will publish a response later this year. The overall delivery timetable remains on track with the Programme focused on building and testing the digital architecture to enable the first cohort of schemes to connect from April 2023.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Cost of Living

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[84909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward the next review of the benefit cap, in the context of the rising cost of living.

**Guy Opperman:**

I can confirm that the Secretary of State has completed his statutory review of the benefit cap levels and decided they should be increased in line with CPI in the year to September 2022 (10.1%) in April 2023.

This increase was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement to Parliament on 17 November 2022.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[88965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his Answer of 7 November 2022 to Question 80819, how many times his Department visited assessment centres to help audit the performance of providers in each year from 2015 to 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not available. We have a stringent performance management regime which includes Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) performance managers attending assessment centres; however, data for such visits is not retained.

Provider performance is measured across a range of service level agreements setting out the department's expectations for service delivery. These include quality, performance delivery targets and customer experience.

Independent Audit is one of the department's tools to measure quality for performance management purposes. It is a self-contained team comprising of experienced health professional assessors who review a sample of assessment reports on a monthly basis to determine their quality. This helps ensure that assessment reports are fit for purpose, clinically justified, and provide sufficient information for the department to make a reasonable decision on entitlement to benefit. It is not an audit of the assessment provider as a whole.

**Kate Osamor:**[\[88966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to his Answer of 7 November 2022 to Question 80819 on Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations, if he will publish the results of the last audit of Health Assessors; Capita and Independent Assessment Services.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We currently have no plans to publish the last audit results for Capita and Independent Assessment Services (IAS).

Referring to our previous answer to PQ80819, audit refers to a comprehensive check of the elements of the assessment, including the evidence collection, further evidence provided, and the assessment report completed by the health professional. It is not an audit of the assessment provider.

Provider performance is measured across a range of service level agreements (SLA) setting out the department's expectations for service delivery. These include quality, performance delivery targets and customer experience.

The monthly quality audit performance against the SLA target for Capita and IAS has already been published for January 2014 to April 2022 as part of the answer to [PQ26035](#).

**■ State Retirement Pensions: Age****Stephen Morgan:**[\[87966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the amount of time it will take for the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report into maladministration over changes to the State Pension age to be completed.

**Laura Trott:**

The Department has not made an assessment of the amount of time it will take for the Ombudsman to complete his report. The Ombudsman is responsible for setting the timeline for his investigation.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Homicide: Females

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[63889\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many women were victims of homicide in each year since 2015.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 October 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**Chris Philp:**

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 17 October is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. [UKSA\\_Response\\_to\\_PQ63889.pdf](#)

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ **EU Programmes: Announcement of £484m immediate investment for the UK R&D and fusion sectors**

**Minister of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) (George Freeman):** [\[HCWS376\]](#)

The government is announcing today a package of **up to £484m funding** to invest in the UK R&D sector and to secure the UK fusion sector's commercial leadership and capabilities, while the EU continues to block our association.

The ongoing uncertainty over access to EU Programmes (Horizon, Copernicus, Euratom R&T and Fusion for Energy) is placing increasing pressure on UK universities and research organisations, as well as causing significant issues for the UK's Fusion and Earth Observation sectors.

UK researchers should already be part of these programmes. However the EU have now delayed our association for nearly two years. The UK has done everything it can to secure association, including entering into formal consultations to encourage the EU to implement their obligations.

It remains the Government's preference to associate to EU R&D programmes and the Government remains ready to discuss association with the EU, but we cannot wait forever. Our priority is to invest in the UK's R&D sector, whether through association or, if delays continue, alternative measures.

The investments announced today include:

- £30m Talent and Research Stabilisation Fund.
- £100m Quality-Related (QR) funding for English universities with additional funding for the Devolved Administrations.
- £200m for UK Research Infrastructures.
- £42.1m for the Fusion Industry Programme.
- £84m for Joint European Torus (JET) Operations.

Over the last few months, officials and I have consulted widely with the research community - this package responds to what we have been hearing are their biggest challenges. These investments are UK wide and will provide targeted support during this time of uncertainty. They aim to support staff retention and local talent strategies at eligible universities and research organisations; ensure the UK's labs remain world class and at the cutting edge of R&D; and offer universities and research organisations the discretion to apply the funding in ways that best suit their local needs. Furthermore they will stimulate and accelerate the growth of the UK's fusion industry, delivering a thriving

UK fusion ecosystem and strengthening the UK's position as leaders in the future global fusion market.

Further to the investments announced today, the government will shortly be announcing new investment and projects to boost the Earth Observation community and mitigate the challenges caused by the delays to association to Copernicus.

It remains the government's preference to associate to EU programmes as envisaged under the TCA, but we cannot wait forever to invest the funding set aside for association in our world-leading R&D sector. Earlier this year we set out details of alternatives proposals which we will implement in the event that association is no longer possible. Further details of these plans will be published shortly.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ **Extension of the UK-Switzerland Services Mobility Agreement**

**Secretary of State for International Trade (Kemi Badenoch):** [\[HCWS377\]](#)

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Swiss Confederation share a deep and trusted trading relationship. We are two global leaders in services trade with deep links between our economies. As per the Office for National Statistics, in 2021, Switzerland was the United Kingdom's 6<sup>th</sup> largest trade in services partner, with trade in services amounting to £18.4bn and accounting for 48% of total UK-Swiss trade.

In December 2020, in recognition of this unique relationship, and to avoid disruption for service providers not covered by the mobility arrangements set out in the Citizens Rights Agreement, my Department, in coordination with the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy negotiated the Temporary Agreement Between the Swiss Confederation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on Services Mobility (The Services Mobility Agreement).

The Services Mobility Agreement allows UK professionals to travel freely to Switzerland and to work and deliver services visa-free for up to 90 days per year. The Agreement also ensures UK professionals will not face economic interests tests or be required to secure work permits during these first 90 days of service supply.

The Agreement also allows Swiss professionals to come to the UK and provide services under contract in a number of key skilled sectors through the UK's Service Supplier visa for up to 12 months, supporting broader trade in vital industries of the UK economy, including finance, consultancy, legal services, the tech sector and the creative industries.

Whilst the Agreement was always intended to be temporary, the UK and Switzerland have agreed to extend the Agreement for a further three years. This will ensure businesses and services providers here in the UK and those in Switzerland are provided with the clarity and certainty they need to continue to make use of this unique and important relationship.

The Services Mobility Agreement also established a working group between the UK and Switzerland on the recognition of professional qualifications. I'm pleased to note the



working group has had meaningful discussions. The UK's aim is for an agreement that will provide clarity for suitably qualified professionals on the long-term arrangements to have their qualifications recognised in each Party's market, whilst protecting regulator autonomy. I will update the House with more information on this in due course.

This prolongation will extend the Services Mobility Agreement on its current terms and will enable us to look ahead to negotiations on an enhanced Free Trade Agreement. We look forward to the opportunity that the negotiations present to pursue a comprehensive agreement that is reflective of the UK and Switzerland's deep and historic trading and political relationship.