



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 24 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: BBC

Emily Thornberry:

[\[92147\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to the judgement of Case Number QB-2022-000174 between the Attorney General and the BBC on 18 November, what costs have been incurred by her Department in its proceedings against the BBC between 1 January 2022 and (a) 24 February, (b) 7 April, (c) 18 May, and (d) 18 November.

Michael Tomlinson:

As at 23 November 2022, the Government incurred £376,775.18 in legal costs arising from the proceedings in which the Government successfully obtained an injunction.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Energy

Patricia Gibson:

[\[92249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues about the potential merits of providing further support for businesses with energy costs after April 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has committed to carrying out a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme by the end of the year to inform decisions on future support. The Government cannot confirm which sectors will receive further support after 31st March 2023 until the review has concluded.

■ Certification Quality Marks

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[92200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision to delay the implementation of the UKCA mark on the test and certification sector.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[92201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he had discussions with representatives of the test and certification sector prior to the announcement of the decision to delay the implementation of the UKCA mark.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government has engaged regularly with industry, including the test and certification sector, on the implementation of the UKCA mark. Whilst recognising that providing additional time to transition to UKCA requirements may lead to reduced

demand for the sector in the immediate term, this decision was taken to reduce immediate burdens and costs for businesses, given current cost of living and supply chain challenges.

The Government will continue to engage with the sector to understand the potential impacts of this change, and will consider whether targeted measures could be used to support a sustainable product testing sector.

■ **Conditions of Employment: Enforcement**

Angela Rayner: [\[88891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains his policy to create a single enforcement body for employment rights as announced in June 2021.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Creating a new body is a substantial organisational change and we are making sure that all aspects of this reform have been thoroughly considered. Primary legislation will be required to create this new body and so timing will be dependent on the legislative timetable.

Angela Rayner: [\[92228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he and his Department still plan to create a single enforcement body for employment rights as committed to in the Conservative 2019 Manifesto; and what timeline he is working to, to bring forward promised legislation on this.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Creating a new body is a substantial organisational change and we are making sure that all aspects of this reform have been thoroughly considered. Primary legislation will be required to create this new body and so timing will be dependent on the legislative timetable.

■ **Construction: Contracts**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[92307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his Department's policy that consumers who have been subject to fraudulent smash and grab minor works contracts are entitled to compensation.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government is aware that JCT Minor Works Building Contracts are generally unsuitable for domestic clients. The Government recommends that homeowners carefully read the requirements of any construction contract, and it is also advisable that homeowners consider obtaining legal advice before signing a contract.

If consumers have suffered from malpractice in relation to building work under any form of contract, they can report this to Local Authority Trading Standards. The

Department does not collect statistics on the use of JCT Minor Works Building Contracts by domestic clients, or adjudications or disputes relating to these.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Departmental Responsibilities**

Chi Onwurah: [\[82298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the Government has created the role of Minister for Science and Investment Security in addition to the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation.

Chi Onwurah: [\[82299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of creating an additional ministerial role for science and investment security on the responsibilities of the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation.

George Freeman:

It hasn't, I am the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation. My Hon. Friend the Member for Wealden is the Minister for Industry and Investment Security with responsibility for the Office for Life Sciences and investment security.

■ **Emergency Services: Power Failures**

Angela Rayner: [\[88893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the protected site list in the Electricity Emergency Supply Code was last reviewed.

Graham Stuart:

The Electricity Supply Emergency Code (ESEC) Protected Sites List was last updated in November 2022. Network Operators update their Protected Sites List regularly.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Farms**

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[89843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether tenants who live in farmhouses on a business energy tariff are eligible for the Energy Bill Support Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount from energy bills for the small percentage of domestic households who are not reached through the main EBSS fund. This includes those who do not have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier, or who get their supply through a commercial intermediary. Further details on how this will affect those who live in farmhouses, as well as timescales and method of delivery, will be announced in the coming weeks.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Olivia Blake: [\[89921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Departments position on the UK's membership of the Energy Charter Treaty of the withdrawal of (a) Germany, (b) France, (c) the Netherlands, (d) Spain, (e) Poland, (f) Slovenia and (g) from that treaty.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is monitoring developments closely in the Energy Charter Treaty as part of its engagement with the Treaty's modernisation process.

■ Energy: Prices

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[90885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help ensure any fall in wholesale energy costs are passed onto domestic consumers promptly.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem calculate the price cap to reflect the efficient costs of supplying energy. Ofgem now update the cap quarterly, so consumers will benefit more quickly from falling wholesale prices. The Government then applies the Energy Price Guarantee to reduce the cost of electricity and gas so that a typical household will pay an average bill of £2,500 a year until April 2023 and then £3,000 a year until April 2024. Where the efficient cost of supplying energy falls below the level of the EPG, the price cap ensures that Standard Variable Tariffs will reflect the lower cost of wholesale energy.

■ Fuel Oil and Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Prices

Virginia Crosbie: [\[92384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October to Question 55106 on Fuel Oil and Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Prices, when he will announce the mechanism which identifies those eligible for the £100 payment for heating oil and liquified natural gas; and how and when recipients will receive payment.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has doubled support to £200 for alternatively fuelled households, in recognition of the pressures caused by these rising fuel costs. The Government is committed to delivering this payment to households as soon as possible this Winter. The Government will announce further information on the delivery and timing of these payments in due course.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Bill Esterson:

[\[92183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to replace the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme when that scheme expires on 31 March 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has announced it will form a new Energy Efficiency Taskforce. The Department is charged with driving improvements in energy efficiency to bring down bills for households, businesses, and the public sector, to reduce energy demand from buildings and industry by 15% by 2030. New government funding worth £6 billion will be made available from 2025 to 2028, in addition to the £6.6 billion provided in this Parliament.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Complaints

Bill Esterson:

[\[92182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the 3,000 complaints his Department received regarding the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises the scheme did not deliver at the rate and scale that was originally hoped for and faced a number of delivery challenges.

While the Government sought to improve the delivery of the scheme, it was important that the Department took stock and considered its approach to upgrading the energy efficiency of homes. The Government made the decision to close the scheme to new applications from the 31st March 2021.

Lessons learnt from this provide valuable insight into the challenges similar schemes face and will be used by senior officials when designing and planning future projects.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Job Creation

Bill Esterson:

[\[92185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many jobs the Green Homes Grant supported in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the voucher scheme, including analysis of scheme outcomes and evidence collected from scheme applicants and other stakeholders, is being undertaken by an independent research organisation. The evaluation includes an assessment of the effect of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme on jobs with findings available in Summer 2023.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Training

Bill Esterson: [\[92184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Green Homes Grant on upskilling the supply chain workforce.

Graham Stuart:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme required installers to be certified to PAS 2030 standards and registered with TrustMark to ensure that only competent and skilled workers were able to install measures on the scheme. According to the data held by TrustMark, the number of registered installers eligible to participate on the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme increased from around 455 when the scheme was first announced in summer 2020 to around 1496 by May 2021. The Government also invested £6m on skills through the Green Homes Grant Skills Training Competition which delivered almost 7000 training opportunities for the retrofit, energy efficiency and low carbon heating supply chain.

■ Horizon 2020

Owen Thompson: [\[88946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential economic impact of the reduction in funding from Horizon 2020 since the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Association to Horizon Europe remains the UK's preference and the Government continues to do everything we can to secure this. The Government's priority remains to support the UK's research and development sector through this period.

In order to mitigate the impact of the EU's refusal to finalise the UK's , on 21st November we announced an immediate package of investments (totalling up to £484 million). This immediate investment will help our excellent research sector to shore up their talent pools, invest confidently in infrastructure and protect the UK's reputation as a science superpower

This additional package builds on the Horizon Europe guarantee scheme, extended in September, which continues to provide funding for eligible, successful UK winners of Horizon Europe calls to ensure UK researchers and businesses can continue to collaborate internationally.

■ Mineworkers' Pension Scheme

Martyn Day: [\[88950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the average amount by which the annual pension received by remaining members of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme would change if the surplus sharing

arrangements were revised to create a (a) 70-30, (b) 90-10 and (c) 100-zero per cent split between the scheme and the Government.

Graham Stuart:

Any surplus will depend on the returns on the Scheme's investments - this will be assessed at the valuation in 2023. The Government has no current plans to change the surplus sharing arrangements.

Martyn Day:

[\[88951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the surplus sharing arrangements for the Mineworker's Pension Scheme on the Government's levelling-up agenda.

Graham Stuart:

The Scheme's surplus-sharing arrangements mean that scheme members receive approximately 33% higher payments than they would otherwise have done. There are currently no plans for a review of the surplus-sharing arrangements. In addition, the Government guarantee ensures that pensions increase in line with RPI.

Martyn Day:

[\[88952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of replacing the existing surplus sharing agreement with the Mineworker's Pension Scheme with a new arrangement in which the Government would only receive a share of surpluses if it is required in future to contribute to the value of the scheme under the existing guarantee.

Graham Stuart:

The Government stated in its response to the BEIS Select Committee Report, published on 29 April 2021, which made this recommendation that it would not agree to such a change as it believes the current arrangements to be fair to Scheme members and taxpayers.

Martyn Day:

[\[88953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of surviving members of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme who have (a) injuries and (b) industrial diseases caused by working in the mining industry which affect their quality of life as of 16 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Government does not hold this information.

■ **Research: Finance**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[89808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to para 6.65 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022,

whether the 35 per cent increase in funding for UK Catapults is a real terms increase; and in which five-year funding cycle the increase will be.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The £1.6bn funding announced for the UK's 9 Catapults on 17 November 2022 is for the Catapult's next five-year funding cycle starting April 2023 and running until March 2028.

The 35% increase for this next five-year funding cycle is the gross total increase from funding provided for the current five-year funding period which runs from March 2018 to April 2023. The 'real terms' increase will be a function of the actual rate of inflation over the next 5 years.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station: Finance**

Alan Brown:

[\[92254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what size stake in the Sizewell C nuclear power station the Government expects to take as a result of the funding of up to £700 million it has announced for that project.

Alan Brown:

[\[92255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral evidence given to the Science and Technology Committee on 2 November 2022, on Delivering Nuclear Power, HC 626, what stake the Government plans to take in Sizewell C nuclear power station.

Graham Stuart:

The Government aims to conclude negotiations this month, subject to final approvals for the investment. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ **Small Businesses: National Insurance**

Bill Esterson:

[\[92181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 18 November 2022 to Question 87824 Small Businesses: Cost of Living, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the national insurance freeze on small and medium sized enterprises.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Economic stability relies on fiscal sustainability and the Autumn Statement fixed the National Insurance Secondary Threshold at £9,100 until April 2028. This allows businesses to plan ahead with certainty.

The Employment Allowance enables small businesses and charities across the UK to reduce their National Insurance contributions by up to £5,000 a year. This allowance, first introduced in 2014 at the rate of £2,000, helps small businesses seeking to grow by hiring their first employee or expanding their existing workforce. It means that around 40% of businesses pay no Employer's National Insurance contributions at all.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Blood: Contamination**

Catherine West: [\[88977\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of to UIN 64378, whether all interim payments to infected individuals and bereaved partners of those affected by contaminated blood were made by the end of October 2022.

Alex Burghart:

I refer to the Minister for the Cabinet Office's previous answer [PQ72224](#) on 2 November 2022.

■ **Cabinet Office: Staff**

Angela Rayner: [\[92234\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of changes resulting from the Autumn Statement to the FTE headcount of his Department in November 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

No final estimate has yet been made of the FTE implications of the Autumn Statement.

The Cabinet Office will make efficiencies and reprioritise so that it can deliver its priorities within its available funding as confirmed by the Autumn Statement. This will include managing inflationary pressures. Our approach will be informed by plans for a smaller, more agile, and more efficient centre of government.

These plans will deliver significant financial savings and put the department in a strong position to manage within our budget. Our FTE will be published as usual in the Cabinet Office annual report and accounts, available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-annual-reports-and-accounts>.

■ **Cabinet Office: York Central**

Rachael Maskell: [\[92267\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to develop the Government hub in York Central with (a) conferencing space and (b) other facilities that benefit the local community.

Rachael Maskell: [\[92268\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department has made on planning for facilities for a Government hub in York Central.

Rachael Maskell: [\[92269\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timetable is for setting out the Government's plans to create a Government hub in York Central.

Jeremy Quin:

The location for a Government Hub has yet to be agreed but GPA is working collaboratively with Homes England, Network Rail and City of York Council to establish if it should be located at York Central. As in all Government Hubs, this Hub will include a Business Events Centre that will provide some limited conferencing facilities for Government Departments. The local community would not normally have access to a Government Hub.

Facilities in any new build Government Hub will be limited but normally include a cafe and a Business Events Centre, which can be reconfigured to provide flexible spaces for various uses.

The final location for the York Government Hub has yet to be agreed but if it were to be at York Central, GPA would need it completed by 2027.

Public Sector Fraud Authority**Angela Rayner:**[\[92232\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Public Sector Fraud Authority Enforcement Unit has been established.

Jeremy Quin:

The Enforcement Unit is currently being designed by experts within the Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) and across government. The design phase will be completed by the end of April 2023 and it will be operational by the end of the 2023/24 financial year. It will have the ability to conduct investigations and enforcement recovery activity on a targeted basis across departments and public bodies to pursue those who seek to defraud vital public services.

Service Industries: Exports**Gareth Thomas:**[\[92074\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much and what proportion of services exports were made by businesses with a headcount of (a) 250 or more, (b) between 50 and 249, (c) between 10 and 49 and (d) less than 10 employees in each of the last 10 years.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 21 November is attached.

Attachments:

1. Response [UKSA_Response_to_PQ92074.pdf]

DEFENCE**■ Defence: Innovation****John Healey:**[\[89725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total allocated funding for the Defence Innovation Loan scheme was in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, and (c) 2022-23.

Alex Chalk:

The Defence and Security Accelerator 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.

In Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 the allocation was £0.

In FY 2021-22 the allocation was £5 million.

In FY 2022-23 the allocation is £10 million.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts**John Healey:**[\[89737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the blocks and modules for the Fleet Solid Support Ships contract will be constructed in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The majority of the work will be carried out in the UK. The mid and forward sections of the ships will be built by Harland & Wolff shipyards in Belfast and Appledore.

Following arrival of aft blocks from Spain, final outfitting, integration of blocks and modules and sensitive systems, as well as all testing and commissioning will take place in Belfast.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[89758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Fleet Solid Support Ship Contract, whether there is a legal mechanism to hold Team Resolute to account on the amount of UK content.

Alex Chalk:

As with any Government contract, mechanisms exist to hold the contractor to account for delivery of their contractual obligations.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Job Creation**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[89755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of new shipbuilding jobs that will be created under the fleet solid support ship contract that will be taken by overseas nationals.

Alex Chalk:

The Fleet Solid Support ships will primarily be built in Belfast and Appledore and the jobs the work will create and sustain will be situated in those localities. There will be a

significant programme of skills transfer and training of UK workers. This contract will see investment in welders and steelworkers and will reduce our dependency on overseas labour currently seen in UK shipyards.

■ **Gurkhas: Conditions of Employment**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[92155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with (a) the Nepalese Government and (b) Gurkha Representatives in the UK on (i) Gurkha pensions and (ii) other entitlements since their meeting in September 2021; and whether he has taken steps to arrange further discussions.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Since September 2021, there have been several meetings held between the Ministry of Defence and the Government of Nepal to discuss the UK-Nepal relationship and the formation of the Bilateral Gurkha Committee. I attended the inaugural Bilateral Gurkha Committee meeting on 3 November 2022 alongside His Excellency, Gyan Chandra Acharya, the Ambassador of Nepal, and Gurkha veteran representatives. I have asked MOD officials to work with the Gurkha community and Service charities to fully understand the issues and welfare concerns both in Nepal and here in the UK, with a follow up meeting at official level due to take place later this month.

■ **Leonardo: Military Aircraft**

Dave Doogan:

[\[92340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what level of serviceable aircraft availability Leonardo are contracted to provide; and whether they are meeting that standard.

Alex Chalk:

Leonardo is contracted to support Apache Mk 1, Merlin Mk 2 and Mk 4/4A and Wildcat Mk 1 and Mk 2 aircraft for the Ministry of Defence.

Leonardo is contracted to make available 26 Mk 2 Merlin helicopters to support the Merlin Helicopter Force (MHF) and 21 Mk 4 Merlin helicopters to support the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF). Leonardo is currently providing MHF with 20 aircraft. This is due to a backlog in providing Depth maintenance for six Merlin Mk 2 helicopters. This shortfall is being addressed by prioritising Merlin Mk 2 maintenance and as a result Leonardo is currently providing CHF with 22 Merlin Mk4/4A aircraft, an increase on the contracted target.

Leonardo is contracted to deliver 14 Apache Mk 1 to the Army Squadrons and is meeting this target.

Leonardo is contracted to provide a forward fleet of 24 Wildcat Mk 1 aircraft which has been met without fail during this Financial Year. Wildcat Mk 2 contracted numbers vary from month to month, dependent on the Navy's choice of when to complete capability upgrades, repairs, and trials, but the target is typically between 19 and 21. Leonardo met the requirement in most months this year.

Merlin Helicopters: Repairs and Maintenance**Dave Doogan:** [\[92339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many unserviceable EH101 aircraft are undergoing work in Royal Navy facilities.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 16 November 2022 to Question 85003.

Attachments:

1. Merlin Helicopters: Repairs and Maintenance [UIN85003.docx]

Ministry of Defence: Small Businesses**John Healey:** [\[88815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of (a) direct, (b) indirect and (c) combined expenditure by his Department was spent on small and medium-sized enterprises in the 2020-21 financial year.

Alex Chalk:

I refer you to my predecessor's answer to Question 62708 of 21 October 2022.

The combined expenditure is 23%.

Attachments:

1. Defence: Procurement [62708 - Defence Procurement.docx]

John Healey: [\[89731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the commitments made in his Department's Opportunity and Innovation: The Defence Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Action Plan published on 27 January 2022, how many innovation challenges the Defence and Security Accelerator has run to enable SMEs to bid for funding since January 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) funds innovation through two main mechanisms, the Open Call for Innovation and Themed Competitions. All of these opportunities are open to SMEs to bid for funding.

Since January 2022 the DASA has run 12 Themed Competitions. The Open Call for Innovation is an enduring competition open all year round.

John Healey: [\[89732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the commitments made in his Department's Opportunity and Innovation: The Defence Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Action Plan published on 27 January 2022, whether his Department has run a competition for SMEs to bid for Defence Innovation Loans since January 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The Defence and Security Accelerator 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.

Defence Innovation Loans are open for proposals all year round. The competition is currently continuously open, meaning proposals will be assessed when submitted.

■ Navy: Training**John Healey:**[\[92092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87744 on Navy: Training, how much his Department paid to Elbit Systems UK as part of Project Selborne as of 21 November 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly reviews its capability programmes. As the result of a recent review, the MOD is in discussion with Elbit Systems UK about their departure from submarine training in the Project Selborne contract and has already agreed the company's departure from Dreadnought Crew Training contract. This has not happened because of any specific issues with Elbit Systems UK or any wrongdoing on their part but rather a result of applying revised operational sovereignty standards for the UK's highest priority capabilities. Elbit Systems UK remains an important and trusted partner across a range of other contracts in Defence.

As Elbit Systems UK are a sub-contractor to Capita Business Services Ltd for Project Selborne, weekly payment information is not held centrally by this Department. However, as of 31 October 2022, Elbit Systems UK had been paid £28.603 million for their work as part of Team Fisher delivering Project Selborne.

Money paid to Elbit Systems UK has been for delivering training and running simulators, and for development costs for new software and simulators. Should Elbit Systems UK depart from Project Selborne or constituent parts of it, this work will be transferred to the prime contractor or a replacement supplier for continued delivery.

John Healey:[\[92093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87744 on Navy: Training, what assessment he has made of the impact the departure of Elbit Systems UK on the delivery of Project Selborne.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly reviews its capability programmes. As the result of a recent review, MOD is in discussion with Elbit Systems UK about their departure from submarine training in the Project Selborne contract and has already agreed the company's departure from Dreadnought Crew Training contract. This has not happened because of any specific issues with Elbit Systems UK or any wrongdoing on their part but rather a result of applying revised operational

sovereignty standards for the UK's highest priority capabilities. Elbit Systems UK remain an important and trusted partner across a range of other contracts in Defence.

Capita Business Services Ltd, as the Prime Contractor delivering Project Selborne, are responsible for ensuring its delivery. Capita will instigate contingency plans to ensure training provision is unaffected.

John Healey:

[\[92094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87744 on Navy: Training, whether he expects to open a new competition for the work Elbit Systems UK were undertaking as part of Project Selborne.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly reviews its capability programmes. As the result of a recent review, MOD is in discussion with Elbit Systems UK about their departure from submarine training in the Project Selborne contract and has already agreed the company's departure from Dreadnought Crew Training contract. This has not happened because of any specific issues with Elbit Systems UK or any wrongdoing on their part but rather a result of applying revised operational sovereignty standards for the UK's highest priority capabilities. Elbit Systems UK remains an important and trusted partner across a range of other contracts in Defence.

Capita Business Services Ltd are responsible for the delivery of Project Selborne. Negotiations with Elbit Systems UK are still ongoing regarding their involvement with Project Selborne. In any event, it is Capita's responsibility to ensure delivery of training is delivered.

John Healey:

[\[92095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87744 on Navy: Training, whether he expects to recover any payments made by his Department to Elbit Systems UK as part of Project Selborne following the departure of the company from the programme.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly reviews its capability programmes. As the result of a recent review, the MOD is in discussion with Elbit Systems UK about their departure from submarine training in the Project Selborne contract and has already agreed the company's departure from Dreadnought Crew Training contract. This has not happened because of any specific issues with Elbit Systems UK or any wrongdoing on their part but rather a result of applying revised operational sovereignty standards for the UK's highest priority capabilities.

Money paid to Elbit Systems UK has been for delivering training and running simulators, and for development costs for new software and simulators. Should Elbit Systems UK depart from Project Selborne or constituent parts of it, this work will be transferred to the prime contractor or a replacement supplier for continued delivery.

Therefore there is no requirement to discuss any recovery of payments already made to Elbit Systems UK, who remain an important and trusted partner across a range of contracts in Defence.

John Healey: [\[92096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) original and (b) current delivery date is for Project Selborne.

Alex Chalk:

Project Selborne is a transformation in the way that the Royal Navy delivers its training, unlocking more opportunities for them to fulfil their potential and get better trained people to the frontline, quicker.

The Selborne contract began on 1 April 2021, with training immediately available until the end of the contract on 31 March 2033. There is provision to amend training provision according to the Royal Navy's requirements, however amendments will not affect the contract's end date.

John Healey: [\[92097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87744 on Navy: Training, when he expects negotiations to conclude on the departure of Elbit Systems UK from Project Selborne.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly reviews its capability programmes. As the result of a recent review, the MOD is in discussion with Elbit Systems UK about their departure from submarine training in the Project Selborne contract and has already agreed the company's departure from Dreadnought Crew Training contract. This has not happened because of any specific issues with Elbit Systems UK or any wrongdoing on their part but rather a result of applying revised operational sovereignty standards for the UK's highest priority capabilities. Elbit Systems UK remains an important and trusted partner across a range of other contracts in Defence.

Negotiations are currently underway with Elbit Systems UK and therefore I am unable to comment further due to commercial sensitivities.

■ **Team Resolute: Apprentices**

John Healey: [\[89738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has placed contractual obligations on Team Resolute to deliver 200 further education opportunities and apprenticeship programmes as part of the Fleet Solid Support Ships contract.

Alex Chalk:

The contract for the Fleet Solid Support ships has not yet been awarded. The ships will primarily be built in the UK to protect the UK's essential security interests. This decision will deliver long-term improvement in UK shipbuilding capacity and capability

through investing in shipbuilding infrastructure, productivity, skills, and a more resilient supply chain.

The Fleet Solid Support ship contract will create a significant number of new jobs, including around 1,200 high quality manufacturing jobs, and hundreds of graduate placements and apprenticeships.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities: Lotteries

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[90751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the annual sales limit placed on charity lotteries.

Paul Scully:

The society lottery annual sales limit was last increased in July 2020 as part of a wider package of changes to society lottery limits.

DCMS published a [review](#) of the impact of these in March 2022. Early indicators are positive, for example the increase in the annual sales limit has allowed some multiple licensed operators who previously had annual sales in excess of £10 million, to take advantage of the new limit to restructure and become single licence holders, and use the cost savings in doing so to increase good cause returns. The review concluded that it is too soon to reach any firm view on the impact of the changes, especially during a time that the effect of the Covid pandemic made any evaluation more difficult, given changes in consumer behaviour over this period which may have had a distorting effect. We want to see more data on annual growth of the sector to fully measure their impact.

My officials will continue working with the Gambling Commission, as part of its regulatory role, to keep the sector under review.

■ English National Opera: Finance

Ms Harriet Harman:

[\[92068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the potential impact of the Arts Council England funding decision to reduce the English National Opera's grant on levelling up.

Stuart Andrew:

Ministers and officials regularly meet their counterparts across His Majesty's Government to discuss shared priorities, including how cultural investment and policy can support levelling up. There have been no recent discussions between the Secretaries of State on this issue specifically.

■ Entain: Money Laundering

Lee Anderson: [\[87987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether Entain has paid the £17 million fine imposed on it by the UK Gambling Commission in August 2022 for anti-money laundering failures.

Paul Scully:

I am unable to comment on specific cases of regulatory action taken by the Gambling Commission. However, I have provided some overarching information on regulatory settlements.

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. The Commission's process for the approval of destinations of regulatory settlements ensures that only projects that meet the criteria are able to receive funds. When a project is approved, it is matched with outstanding funds and payment is arranged swiftly, with funds being ringfenced pending the payment. More information on the current process and destinations is available at the Gambling Commission's [website](#).

■ Football Governance Fan-led Review: Expenditure

Lucy Powell: [\[88887\]](#)

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 the Fan-Led Review of Football Governance and associated proposed legislation since April 2021.

Stuart Andrew:

Figures on DCMS's public spending can be found in DCMS's Annual Report and Accounts, available on [GOV.UK](#). Spending on the Fan Led Review and associated proposed legislation is a subset of the reported spend of the Sport, Gambling and Ceremonials Directorate.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Licensing

Rachael Maskell: [\[92257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she plans to take to review regulation of the short term holiday let sector.

Rachael Maskell: [\[92260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what comparative assessment she has made of the potential merits of (a) licensing or (b) creating a register for short term holiday lets in the context of monitoring local housing availability.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a licensing regime for short term holiday lets in communities which are popular as holiday destinations.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government supports the sharing economy and the benefits it can bring. However, it is also aware of concerns about the uneven regulatory requirements in the guest accommodation sector, and possible negative impacts on some local communities compared to other types of accommodation.

In June, DCMS issued a Call for Evidence on the benefits and challenges presented by the rise in short-term and holiday letting seen in England over the last 10 to 15 years.

The Call for Evidence closed on 21 September and we are now carefully analysing the 4,000 responses we received. The analysis of the responses will inform the next steps, and we will look to provide updates to the sector in due course.

■ **Internet and Pornography: Children**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[89745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the answer of 18 October to Question 59454 on Internet and Pornography: Children, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of appointing an independent ombudsman or organisation to assess (a) online harmful content and (b) pornography present on a service provider's online presence rather than by the service providers themselves.

Paul Scully:

The Online Safety Bill introduces clear legal responsibilities on service providers to understand the risk of harm to users and put in place systems and processes to improve user safety. Service providers will be required to protect children from harmful content online, including pornography, and Ofcom will be able to take enforcement action against services which do not comply with these duties.

The Government has considered the merits of establishing an independent ombudsman to consider harmful content online, including access to pornographic material. However, it is not necessary as a number of the key functions performed by an Ombudsman, such as consumer research and advocacy for affected groups, will be performed by Ofcom as regulator. The Online Safety Bill also sets out a comprehensive range of duties on all regulated services in relation to clear and accessible complaints and redress mechanisms. Ofcom will be able to take enforcement action against services who do not comply fully with their user redress duties.

■ Mobile Phones: Fees and Charges

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[90854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has she made of the potential impact of the reintroduction of roaming charges on the UK tourism industry.

Julia Lopez:

Whilst the government has not conducted an assessment of the potential impact of the reintroduction of international mobile roaming charges on the UK tourism industry, we work closely with the tourism industry and wider stakeholders to ensure that the UK tourism offer is as competitive as possible. We await the outcome of Ofcom's policy programme into mobile roaming and continue to follow developments in the market closely.

■ Musicians: EU Countries

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[92069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she last met representatives of the music industry to discuss UK musicians touring in the EU.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to supporting the creative sector to adapt to new arrangements with the EU. We have worked with the sector and directly with Member States to clarify arrangements, press for specific changes from Member States, and introduce unilateral measures where possible.

Ministers and officials from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) engage with the music sector regularly through bilateral meetings and visits, discussing a range of issues, including touring.

This engagement includes meetings with industry and relevant departments on specific issues around touring, such as with the Department for Transport on haulage issues or DEFRA on CITES certificates. It also includes the DCMS-led touring group, which met most recently in June 2022, with attendance from the DCMS Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure, officials from across government and devolved authorities, and representatives of the creative and cultural sectors.

EDUCATION

■ Adoption

Rachael Maskell: [\[88930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the number of parents willing to adopt children and young people.

Claire Coutinho:

Over £2.5 million of government funding has been invested in adopter recruitment, with further committed funding of £1 million between 2023 - 2025.

The department has worked closely with the Regional Adoption Agencies since 2019 to test new and innovative ways for adopter recruitment. This saw the launch of the #YouCanAdopt campaign in 2020. As a result, the number of approved adopters waiting to be matched with a child rose from 1,900 at 31 March 2019 to 2,620 at 31 March 2022.

The department's National Adoption Strategy sets out our aims and ambitions to build on this best practice and drive consistent, high-quality standards across the whole of the adoption process, including adopter recruitment. In March 2022, the department announced an investment of £160 million over three years to deliver the strategy.

More detailed information about our plans for recruitment in the Strategy can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006232/Adoption_strategy.pdf.

■ Children in Care**Helen Hayes:****[92294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many looked after children were cared for in a family and friends foster placement by local authorities as of 31 March 2022.

Helen Hayes:**[92295]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many looked after children were cared for in a family and friends foster placement by (a) age and (b) ethnicity as of 31 March 2022.

Helen Hayes:**[92296]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many looked after children were cared for in a family and friends foster placement as of (a) 31 March 2022, (b) 31 March 2021, (c) 31 March 2020, (d) 31 March 2019 and (e) each year prior for which comparable statistical information is available.

Helen Hayes:**[92297]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many of the looked-after children who were placed in a foster placement with a family or friend as of 31 March 2022 had also previously been in (a) an unrelated foster placement, (b) another family and friends care placement, (c) a children's home and (d) other provision for looked-after children at a (i) national, (ii) regional and (iii) local authority area level.

Helen Hayes:**[92298]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children ceased being looked after because (a) they returned home to live with parents or other person with parental responsibility (b) are subject to a special guardianship order (c) a residence order or child

arrangement order was granted in the year ending 31 March 2022, broken down by local authority.

Claire Coutinho:

The number of looked-after children who were cared for in a relative or friend foster placement from 2018 to 2022 is published in the table 'A2 - Children looked after on 31 March by placement, in England, 2018 to 2022' in the statistical release, which can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>. Figures for earlier years are available from previous statistical releases and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>.

The latest figures on looked-after children who were cared for in a relative or friend foster placement by age and ethnicity and at local authority level are shown in the attached tables.

Full information on the former placement arrangements of looked-after children who are in a relative or friend foster placement is not held in the form requested. Due to the way in which the data is held, the information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The number of children ceasing to be looked after because (a) they returned home to live with parents or another person with parental responsibility, (b) are subject to a special guardianship order or (c) a residence order or child arrangement order was granted in the year ending 31 March 2022, broken down by local authority can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

The table requested can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c2aacc3e-17eb-46fa-9372-08dacc5b2c16>.

Attachments:

1. 92294 92295 92296 92297 92298 table QC 221122 [92294 92295 92296 92297 92298 table QC 221122.xlsx]

■ **GCE A-level and GCSE: Assessments**

Hilary Benn:

[89746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether students will be given information on what will be in their (a) GCSE and (b) A-level exams in England in summer 2023.

Nick Gibb:

On 29 September, the Department and Ofqual confirmed exams will largely return to well-established, pre-pandemic arrangements in summer 2023.

The Department confirmed that advance information will not be provided for any exams taken in summer 2023. The Department has, however, decided that formulae and equation sheets for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined sciences exams should be provided in summer 2023, as was the case for exams in 2022. Ofqual has

also confirmed a return to pre-pandemic grading in 2023. To protect pupils against the disruption of recent years, and in case pupils' performance is slightly lower than before the COVID-19 pandemic, senior examiners will use the grades achieved by previous cohorts of pupils, along with prior attainment data, to inform their decisions on where to set grade boundaries.

These decisions reflect that while the 2023 cohort may have experienced some disruption due to the pandemic over the course of their qualifications, it has not been as significant as that experienced by pupils who received qualifications in 2022. Pupils will, for example, have had more time to cover the curriculum, practise assessments and understand education recovery programmes and interventions.

■ Literacy: Teaching Methods

Feryal Clark: [\[89914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that schools are delivering phonics programmes.

Feryal Clark: [\[89915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Departments policy paper entitled Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child, published March 2022, what steps her Department is taking to help 90 per cent of children reach the expected standards in literacy and numeracy.

Feryal Clark: [\[89916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to ensure children with speech and language challenges benefit from programmes to support literacy and numeracy.

Nick Gibb:

The Schools White Paper, published in March 2022, sets out the Department's policies to improve literacy and numeracy.

Since its launch in 2018, the English Hubs programme has provided targeted support to several thousands of schools across England. The 34 English Hubs in the programme are primary schools which are outstanding at teaching early reading. Over 1,000 schools which were underperforming in phonics have received intensive support, reaching approximately 50,000 pupils in Reception and Year 1. In addition to this, more than 5,000 schools have been supported through medium level support, which provides schools with targeted support, continuing professional development opportunities, and workshops focused on phonics and the teaching of early reading.

The Department is continuing to support and enhance mathematics teaching through the national network of 40 school led Maths Hubs, which are helping local schools improve the quality of their mathematics teaching based on best practice, covering all regions of England. This includes the £100 million Teaching for Mastery programme, which is bringing training on mastery teaching to 11,000 schools across England by 2023.

The Department published a list of approved phonics programmes in 2021 to support schools in choosing a phonics programme. This is together with the provision of £4 million additional funding in the 2021/22 academic year to eligible schools to support them in obtaining validated phonics schemes, whilst committing a further £8.7 million in the 2022/23 academic year to extend this nationwide. In 2021, the 'Reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy' was published. This defines best practice for teachers and school leaders, and the introduction of specialist training to drive better literacy through a new National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy and a new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership.

Guidance has been published to support teachers in planning and prioritising the mathematics curriculum from Key Stage 1 to 3, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-mathematics-in-primary-schools> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-mathematics-at-key-stage-3>. This is alongside the establishment of two new support schemes through the Maths Hubs programme that will reach thousands of schools within their first year alone.

The Department will also be funding up to £180 million in the Early Years workforce, including training for Early Years practitioners to support literacy and numeracy teaching.

The Department recognises the importance of speech and language in young people's development and has funded £17 million to deliver the Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme, which supports children in Reception with their language ability. Over two thirds of eligible mainstream primary schools are taking part in this evidence based programme, benefitting around 90,000 children who are most in need of language support. Providing support for early language is a founding aim of the English Hub programme. In January 2023, the Hubs will begin delivering a new early language support scheme to schools which has been designed by Hubs and external experts.

■ Primary Education: Sports

Jonathan Gullis:

[89065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of announcing (a) three or (b) five year funding settlements for Primary PE and Sport Premium on school planning for improvements to the quality of the PE, sport and physical activity for children; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is considering arrangements for the primary PE and Sport premium for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond. The Department understands the importance of providing schools with sufficient notice of future funding and will confirm the position as early as possible.

■ School Meals: Meat

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[89891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the National Food Strategy's recommendation to remove the requirement to serve meat three times a week from the School Food Standards.

Nick Gibb:

The Department believes that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high-quality and nutritious food, that encourages healthy eating habits for life.

The Department's current focus is on promoting compliance with the school food standards and it will keep this under review. In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the Department is doing to strengthen adherence, including piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, spending up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites setting out their whole school approach to food.

The Department will consider the National Food Strategy's recommendations in future updates.

■ Schools: Asylum

Helen Hayes:

[\[92293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the ability of local authorities to provide school places for asylum-seeking children placed in Home Office procured accommodation.

Claire Coutinho:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places sits with local authorities. The department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support local authorities provide school places, based on their own forecast data.

The department engages with local authorities on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional places and to consider alternatives where necessary. When local authorities are experiencing difficulties, including with new arrivals from overseas, the department supports them to find solutions as quickly as possible.

■ Schools: Repairs and Maintenance

Munira Wilson:

[\[92364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the estimated cost to the public purse is of the capital projects announced in each of the three rounds of the school rebuilding programme.

Nick Gibb:

The School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) was announced in 2020 and will rebuild or significantly refurbish buildings at 500 schools over the next decade. So far, the

Department has confirmed 161 projects for the programme across three rounds, with each round supported by approximately £1 billion in capital funding.

Forecasted costs and scope for SRP projects are known once a feasibility study has been completed and following the awarding of contracts. The Department publishes details of all contracts awarded over £10,000, including for SRP, to the 'contracts finder' section of GOV.UK. This service is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>.

■ Schools: Staff

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[89753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, what proportion of the additional £2.3 billion in funding for schools will be allocated to the recruitment and retention of specialist teachers and staff.

Nick Gibb:

The 2022 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 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 2021 Spending Review.

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. This additional funding will be used to support both mainstream schools and Local Authorities' high needs budgets. The Department will set out plans for allocation shortly.

■ Special Educational Needs

Geraint Davies:

[88782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report from Ofsted, Alternative provision for primary-age pupils in England: a long-term 'destination' or a 'temporary solution'?, published on 8 November 2022, what steps she is taking to respond to the findings that a) schools need more specialist help for primary age children with additional needs and b) limited access to professional help, such as speech and language therapists or educational psychology services, could be leading to more Alternative Provision referrals and potentially more permanent exclusions.

Claire Coutinho:

The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper, published on 29 March 2022, set out a new vision and delivery model to make AP an integral part of the SEND system. The reforms will enable local areas to ensure that children and young people with additional needs get the right support, in the right setting, at the right time.

The proposals include a greater focus on early intervention, with AP schools providing specialist support to children and young people in mainstream schools to help address their behavioural and health needs. Over time, this will reduce the number of preventable exclusions and long-term placements and improve the experiences, wellbeing, and outcomes of children and young people.

In addition, the department is taking steps to increase the capacity across the whole of the specialist workforce. Since 2020, there has been an increase in the number of educational psychologist trainees that are funded by the department, from 160 to over 200 per annum. We have also invested £30 million to train three more cohorts for the 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23 academic years. Earlier this year a further investment of over £10 million was announced to train over 200 more educational psychologists, beginning their courses in September 2023.

Since September 2020, all eligible nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students have been able to apply for a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year, with further financial support available for childcare, accommodation, and travel costs. This aims to support the supply of more speech and language therapists and occupational therapists to the NHS.

The green paper consultation closed on 22 July 2022. The department is currently reviewing the feedback and using this, along with continued engagement with the system, to inform the next stage of delivering improvements for children, young people and their families.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Finance**

Helen Hayes:

[\[88961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the ability of local authorities to adequately fund SEND education.

Claire Coutinho:

Core schools' funding is £4 billion higher this year than last year, and the additional funding announced at the Autumn Statement means it will rise by another £3.5 billion, on top of that, next year. Taken together, that means a 15% increase in funding in two years.

For those children with the most complex needs, the department announced in July 2022 that we would be increasing high needs funding by £1.65 billion over two years, between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This is an increase of 21% and will bring total high needs funding to £9.7 billion by the 2023/24 financial year.

The department will also allocate additional funding following the £2 billion funding increases announced in the Autumn Statement. The department will set out our plans for the allocation of this additional funding shortly. This extra funding, on top of significant increases already announced, demonstrates that schools are a key priority for the government, especially in the context of the wider fiscal challenges we are facing. The extra funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing

costs of supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Local authorities and schools have the flexibility to decide how they spend their funding allocations, as the department believes that they are best placed to decide what provision is required locally, in order to deliver their statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, to support children and young people with SEND.

Helen Hayes:

[88962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the level of funding for SEND education on people with SEND.

Claire Coutinho:

The department recognises that the current system does not consistently deliver the outcomes we want and expect for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their families or the people and services who support them. On 29 March 2022, the department published the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper, which sets out our plans to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP, within a fairer and more financially sustainable system.

The consultation closed on 22 July 2022. The department is currently reviewing the feedback we received and are using this, along with continued engagement with the system, to inform the next stage of delivering improvements for children, young people and their families.

The department will continue to support the system in the immediate term to deliver change, and continue to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP.

High needs funding has increased by over 40% from 2019/20 to 2022/23, and for those children with the most complex needs, the department announced in July 2022 that we would be increasing high needs funding by £1.65 billion over the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This is an increase of 21% and will bring total high needs funding to £9.7 billion by the 2023/24 financial year.

The department will also allocate additional funding following the £2 billion funding increases announced in the Autumn Statement. The department will set out our plans for the allocation of this additional funding shortly. This extra funding, on top of significant increases already announced, demonstrates that schools are a key priority for the government, especially in the context of the wider fiscal challenges we are facing. The extra funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with SEND.

■ Special Educational Needs: Hornsey and Wood Green

Catherine West:

[\[88976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the funding provided by her Department to schools for children with SEND who (a) have and (b) do not have an education, health and care plan in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

Claire Coutinho:

The majority of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) do not have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, and are supported by their schools from the allocations of funding they receive for all their pupils.

For those children with the most complex needs, the department announced in July 2022 that we would be increasing high needs funding, within the core schools budget, by £1.65 billion over two years, between the 2021/22 and 2023/24 financial years. This is an increase of 21% and will bring total high needs funding to £9.7 billion by 2023/24. The provisional high needs funding allocation for Haringey in the 2023/24 financial year is £54 million. This represents an increase of 20% per pupil on the amount of high needs funding allocated over two years to 2023/24 compared to 2021/22. Overall, the high needs budget has risen by more than 40% over three years.

Funding provided through the schools National Funding Formula (NFF) should be used by schools to support pupils with low to mid-level SEND, who are educated in mainstream schools, and may not have an EHC plan. Schools in Hornsey and Wood Green are attracting £123.3 million in 2023/24, based on the schools NFF. This represents an increase of 5.2% per pupil for their pupil-led funding across two years to 2023/24 compared to 2021/22. Constituency figures are based on an aggregate of school allocations.

In addition to the figures above, the department will allocate more funding in 2023/24 following the £2 billion funding increases announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement. This additional funding will be used to support both mainstream schools, including those in Hornsey and Wood Green, and local authorities, including Haringey, with the costs of supporting children and young people with SEND. The department will set out our plans for allocation shortly.

■ Teachers: Standards

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[89752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of trends in the level of specialist teachers on the educational attainment of students in (a) primary, (b) secondary and (c) further education.

Nick Gibb:

Teacher quality is the most important in-school determinant of pupil outcomes. This is why the Department is taking action to attract more people to teaching and enable them to succeed through transforming their training and support.

9 in 10 hours taught in English Baccalaureate subjects in state funded secondary schools in 2021/22 were taught by a teacher with a relevant post-A level qualification. The Teachers' Standards specify the subject knowledge required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

Information on teachers' post-A level qualifications and the subjects taught in secondary schools is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics. Details can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

The Department does not hold or publish data linking subject specialist teachers with attainment.

The Department has introduced a range of measures to attract teachers for the 2023/24 academic year, including tax-free bursaries worth £27,000 and tax-free scholarships worth £29,000 tax-free, to encourage talented trainees to key subjects such as chemistry, computing, mathematics, and physics. There are also bursaries of £25,000 for languages and scholarships of £27,000 for French, Spanish and German. The Department has also introduced an initial teacher training scholarship in modern foreign languages from 2023 to attract the most talented language graduates to teaching.

The new national further education (FE) recruitment campaign and Teach in FE service will support prospective FE teachers into jobs. It is expected to reach millions of prospective teaching staff, and target those with valuable experience in industry to train the next generation of technical experts.

The Department also funds the Taking Teaching Further programme which supports industry experts to move into FE teaching, and the Department is providing bursaries worth up to £26,000 in 2022/23, matched to school scholarship values, to support FE teacher training in priority subject areas such as science, mathematics and engineering.

■ Teachers: Vacancies**Sir Mark Hendrick:****[89751]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the number of specialist teacher positions that remain vacant after (a) 6 months and (b) 12 months in (i) Preston constituency, (ii) Lancashire and (iii) England.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not collected by the Department.

Information on the state-funded school workforce in England, including the number and rate of teacher vacancies by school, post and subject (where applicable) each

November, is published in the annual 'School Workforce in England' national statistics release at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: Northern Ireland

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[\[92112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost to the public purse has been of the establishment and operation of the Movement Assistance Scheme (a) between 1 January 2021 and 21 November 2022, (b) prior to 1 January 2021 and (c) in each six-month period between 1 January 2021 and 21 November 2022.

Mark Spencer:

The Movement Assistance Scheme has cost £18.08m up to 30 September 2022.

This comprises of £3.53m in the 2020/2021 Financial Year, £9.78m in 2021/2022

Financial Year and £4.77m in the 2022/2023 Financial Year. These are the most up to date figures currently available.

■ Air Pollution

Ruth Jones:

[\[86603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people live in areas with air pollution levels above legal limits in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra does not estimate the number of people living in areas with air pollution levels above legal limits in England because populations are highly mobile. An individual's daily exposure will depend on where they spend their time and how they travel.

In accordance with the Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010), Defra undertakes an annual assessment of air pollutants based on monitoring and supplementary modelling for all regions in England. This includes an assessment of trends and spatial distribution, together with information on any pollution events during the year. The latest report highlights how the United Kingdom is compliant with the limit values for all pollutants except nitrogen dioxide, and compliant with all target values except for BaP and nickel; accessible here: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/annualreport/>

■ Animals: Delivery Services

Ruth Jones:

[\[89020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 permits animals to be sent to consumers through the postal service or via courier while alive.

Ruth Jones: [\[89021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of banning the sale of decapod crustaceans to be sent to consumers through the postal service or via courier while alive.

Ruth Jones: [\[89023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of amending the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 following the commencement of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Legislation protects all animals from being transported in a way likely to cause injury or suffering. Transportation of vertebrate animals for a commercial purpose must comply fully with legal requirements aimed at protecting their welfare, set out in Regulation (EC) 1/2005 (as retained). Vertebrate animals transported for non-commercial purposes and invertebrates are protected from injury or unnecessary suffering by a general duty of care provision in Article 4 of The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 (WATEO) and equivalent national legislation in Scotland and Wales.

WATEO requires that animals are transported in receptacles or means of transport under conditions (in particular with regard to space, ventilation, temperature and security) and with such supply of liquid and oxygen, as are appropriate for the species concerned.

■ Avian Influenza: Compensation

Priti Patel: [\[86472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has paid in compensation to claimants with premises affected by avian influenza in each month of 2022.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cambridge, on 21 November 2022, [PQ UIN 87857](#).

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Priti Patel: [\[86469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) premises were affected by and (b) birds were culled following avian influenza outbreaks in (i) Witham constituency, (ii) Essex and (iii) the UK in the latest period for which data is available.

Mark Spencer:

During the 2022/2023 avian influenza outbreak season starting on 1st October 2022 up to 15th November 2022, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been

confirmed in poultry and captive birds at six premises in Essex, of which three have been in the Witham constituency. During the same period of time, HPAI has been confirmed in poultry and captive birds at 121 premises in the UK (111 cases in England, six cases in Scotland, three cases in Wales and one case in Northern Ireland).

Since 1st October 2022, at premises in Essex where avian influenza has been confirmed in poultry or other captive birds, approximately 48,500 birds have died or been humanely culled and disposed by HM Government for avian influenza control purposes. Of those, approximately 7,600 birds have been at infected premises in the Witham constituency. During the same period, approximately 3.4 million birds have died or are being culled and disposed by HM Government for avian influenza control purposes in the UK. This is a small proportion of overall poultry production (approximately 20 million birds slaughtered for human consumption per week).

■ **Birds: Conservation**

Olivia Blake:

[\[88037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the report by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds entitled 2021: Birdcrime: fighting raptor persecution, published 15 October 2022; and whether her Department has taken recent steps to help tackle raptor persecution.

Trudy Harrison:

The RSPB 2021 Birdcrime report, was published on 15th November so, as yet, we have not fully assessed the findings of the report.

The Government takes wildlife crime seriously. Raptor persecution is a national wildlife crime priority and there are strong penalties in place for offences committed against birds of prey and other wildlife. Most wildlife crimes carry up to an unlimited fine and/or a six-month custodial sentence.

Defra supports the work of Bird of Prey Crime Priority Delivery Group, which brings together police, government and stakeholders from conservation and country sports organisations to tackle raptor persecution. This year Defra has more than doubled its funding of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) from £165,000 per year to over £1.2 million over the next three years to target wildlife crime priorities, in particular crimes against birds of prey. In addition, we are providing funding to Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) to develop DNA forensic analysis for the police and other organisations investigating crimes against peregrine falcons.

■ **Climate Change**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[78854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is encourage investment in (a) hedgerows and (b) other nature-based climate solutions.

Trudy Harrison:

HM Government is investing in nature based solutions more than ever before, from a range of sources. This includes our £750m Nature for Climate Fund. We are also introducing three new environmental land management schemes that will invest in a range of nature based solutions: the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI); Local Nature Recovery; and Landscape Recovery. These schemes will pay for sustainable farming practices, such as reducing carbon emissions, creating, and preserving habitat, such as hedgerows, and making landscape-scale environmental changes, all of which are important steps towards achieving our 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions and our carbon net zero goals. A Hedgerow Standard has been included within the initial phase of piloting of the SFI scheme. Capital grants to support the planting and reinstatement of hedgerows are currently available via the Countryside Stewardship scheme. The SFI will also focus on grassland management, agro-forestry, cropland management, soil management, and nutrient management.

In addition to the public funding, we are enabling a step change in investment flows from the private sector, and we are developing our environmental land management schemes for farmers and landowners so that they can crowd in private investment. HM Government has set a new target to raise at least £500 million in private finance to support nature's recovery every year by 2027 in England, rising to more than £1 billion per year by 2030. We are putting in place the conditions for the private sector to invest in nature-based solutions, including through our Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund which is supporting the development of 86 projects across England, which have the potential to generate revenue from ecosystem services in order to attract and repay investment. We are also developing a blended finance Big Nature Impact Fund which will leverage private capital to invest in such projects.

■ Environment Protection**Douglas Chapman:**[\[88910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help (a) limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5 celsius, (b) address biodiversity decline by 2030, (c) protect nature and (d) decarbonise.

Trudy Harrison:

At COP26, 197 Parties agreed to the Glasgow Climate Pact to urgently keep 1.5°C alive. We brought nature to the heart of the climate COP for the very first time, with more than 140 world leaders, representing 91 per cent of the world's forests, committing to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. At COP27, the UK Government continued to demonstrate leadership on nature and climate through new investments: the Secretary of State committed to £30 million of seed finance into the Big Nature Impact Fund, a new public-private fund for nature in the UK which will unlock significant private investment into nature projects. She (not he) also announced an additional £12 million investment in the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance to make marine biodiversity and vulnerable coastal

communities more resilient, and a further £6 million in the UN's Climate Promise programme to help developing countries achieve their climate commitments.

These steps build on a strong foundation of action and leadership by the UK, reducing our emissions by over 40% since 1990 while growing the economy by three quarters. Defra has a vital role to play in delivering the Government's Net Zero Strategy and ensuring nature-based solutions are a vital part of the climate agenda.

The UK will continue to lead globally on the road to the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15.2, hosted in Montreal, where we must secure agreement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030. The UK is committed to securing an ambitious outcome. We will continue to champion the protection of at least 30% of land and ocean globally, as the chair of the Global Ocean Alliance.

Responsibility for the domestic environment is devolved. However, in England, we are taking unprecedented steps to address biodiversity decline and protect nature, not least through our world leading Environment Act, which requires a new, legally binding target to be set in England to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, and introduces Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and a strengthened biodiversity duty on public authorities to work together to protect our native species.

■ **Flowers: UK Trade with EU**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[80578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the UK florist industry's decline in trade with the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Mark Spencer:

HM Revenue & Customs publishes statistics on the United Kingdom's international trade in goods including with the EU and these are regularly reviewed by Defra. The combined effects of the United Kingdom leaving the EU and the subsequent transition period, along with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, supply chain disruption and global recession, have all led to greater volatility in trade in the past two years.

With production of ornamental horticulture being worth £1.6 billion in the United Kingdom at farm-gate in 2021, £128 million of which was from flowers and bulbs, HM Government recognises the importance of the sector both to the economy and to people's well-being, and has been working with the industry on an action plan exploring opportunities to accelerate the sector's growth through a collaborative approach between HM Government and industry.

■ **Food: Health**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[87803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on consumer diets of delaying (a) the food strategy

and (b) subsequent policies on encouraging (i) wholegrains, (ii) fibre and (iii) healthier substitutes.

Mark Spencer:

The Government Food Strategy set out our plan to ensure the food system is fit for the future and supports healthy and sustainable diets and we are focused on implementing the measures in the strategy. We have committed to report on how we are taking forward our actions under the strategy alongside the next UK Food Security Report.

A balanced diet is rich in fruit and vegetables, beans, pulses and wholegrain starchy carbohydrates. It can also include dairy, fish and meat which are valuable sources of many nutrients important for human health. The Government already encourages everyone to have a healthy balanced diet in line with the UK's healthy eating model, the Eatwell Guide. The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to have a well-balanced and healthy diet.

■ **Food: Prices**

Beth Winter:

[\[89056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a list of staple food items subject to temporary price control measures.

Beth Winter:

[\[89057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) food retail organisations and (b) retailers on the potential merits of establishing a list of staple food items subject to temporary price control measures.

Mark Spencer:

Defra officials have regular discussions with retailers about a range of issues, including the impacts that inflationary pressures have on consumers. However, it is not for the UK Government to set retail food prices nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by the companies but through our regular engagement we continue to explore the measures retailers can take to ensure the availability of affordable food.

■ **Forests and Wildlife: Crime**

Olivia Blake:

[\[88036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when her Department will respond formally to the recommendations in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit Report: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, published in August 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

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

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

Progress has already been made in response to the report. For example, this year Defra has more than doubled its funding of the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) from £165,000 per year to over £1.2 million over the next three years. Additionally, Border Force has increased numbers in their team specialising in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Defra is not under any obligation to formally respond to the UNODC's assessment, but we will identify where we can act, including with stakeholders, to strengthen the UK's approach to tackling wildlife and forestry crime.

■ Hedges and Ditches: Climate Change**Fleur Anderson:**[\[78855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Climate Change Committee report entitled Net Zero: The UK's contribution to stopping global warming, published in May 2019, if he will take steps to implement that report's recommendation to increase the hedgerow network by 40 per cent by 2050.

Trudy Harrison:

We are required by the Environment Act 2021 to set at least one long-term biodiversity target, in addition to our target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. This target, and others set under the Act, will help target the causes of decline and drive actions to deliver nature recovery. To meet our species abundance target we will need to create more, better joined up habitats, which will include hedgerows.

Defra will encourage and support increased hedgerows through our environmental land management schemes. We are working with Sustainable Farming Incentive pilot participants to gather learning from the pilot version of the Standard and are incorporating this feedback into the development of the live version of the Hedgerow Standard and its supporting capital items, which are due to be rolled out into the scheme in 2023.

■ Marine Environment: Chemicals**Kate Osamor:**[\[83693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to stop chemical pollution in UK marine habitats.

Trudy Harrison:

We are committed to leading efforts to protect the marine environment and counter marine pollution. The UK Marine Strategy Programme of Measures sets out a comprehensive list of actions that HM Government is taking to reduce pollution in the marine environment and move us towards Good Environmental Status in our seas.

Outdoor Recreation**Paul Blomfield:**[\[83610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made for the implications of her policies of the proposals outlined in the British Mountaineering Council's open letter entitled the Outdoors for All.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government agrees with the three proposals set out in British Mountaineering Council's open letter specifically that there should be fair access to the outdoors for everyone, better opportunities for young people to access the outdoors, and that we should invest in the health and well-being benefits of spending time in nature. We are working across departments developing a number of policies to open up access; for example, through active travel, nature-rich school grounds, more urban parks and green social prescribing.

To support fair access for all, for example:

- we are delivering the £9 million Levelling Up Parks Fund which will create or significantly refurbish over 100 green spaces, targeting the 100 most deprived urban communities across the UK who also lack accessible green space;
- through the England Trees Action Plan we are creating Woodland Creation Partnerships and Community Forests to enable the creation of large scale publicly accessible woodlands near towns and cities; and
- we have also committed to continuing to fund access in the development of our new Environmental Land Management schemes.

To support opportunities for young people to connect with nature we are, for example:

- committing to increase opportunities for all children and young people to spend time and get involved in nature;
- implementing a new Climate Leaders Award and National Education Nature Park, which in combination will encourage children and young people to learn about biodiversity and sustainability and take action to improve their school grounds; and
- Introducing a new Natural History GCSE.

To support the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature, we are, for example:

- completing the England Coast Path, which at around 2,700 miles will be the longest coastal walking route in the world. 800 miles of the England Coast Path are now open to the public;
- delivering the £5.77 million cross-governmental green social prescribing programme, which is aiming to implement green social prescribing in order to improve mental health outcomes and reduce health inequalities; and
- investing an unprecedented £2 billion in walking and cycling over this Parliament, building hundreds of miles of high-quality cycle lanes and increasing access to a range of places including green spaces.

■ Packaging: Recycling

Ruth Jones:

[\[80892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, in relation to the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, (a) if it remains her policy to implement this scheme in 2024, (b) what progress her Department has made on the design and set up of an Administrator for that scheme and (c) what discussions she has had on that scheme with her counterparts in the devolved administrations.

Rebecca Pow:

We remain committed to implementing Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) in a phased manner from 2024. As set out in the pEPR Government response, the Scheme Administrator will be hosted in the public sector and will be appointed in 2023. The design and set-up of the Scheme Administrator are currently being developed in close collaboration with packaging producers. HM Government is working closely with the Devolved Administrations to deliver pEPR across the UK.

■ Peat Bogs: Conservation

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[92134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hectares of peatland have been put under restoration management in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland, in each year between 2015-2022.

Trudy Harrison:

Approximately 100,000 hectares of peatland across the UK have been rewetted to date. Further plans for peatland restoration and responsible management were set out in the England Peat Action Plan (May 2021) and Net Zero Strategy (October 2021).

■ Plastics: Pollution Control

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[90867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps has she taken to help reduce plastic pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

We have made significant progress, 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 and plastic drink stirrers, and banning 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 10p charge.

We recently consulted on proposals to ban the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, and balloon sticks, and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers, including cups. We are committed to going further and addressing other sources of plastic pollution, which is why we also ran a call for evidence to help us gather information on other problematic plastic items.

Our Environment Act (2021) enables us to significantly change the way that we manage our plastic waste, including powers to create extended producer responsibility schemes; introduce deposit return schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and gives us the power to set new charges for other single-use items.

■ Property Flood Resilience Scheme**Dan Jarvis:**[\[92217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October to Question 61123 on Property Flood Resilience Scheme, whether her Department plans to publish the update Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant scheme before the end of this year.

Rebecca Pow:

The outcomes of the evaluation of the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Repair Grant Scheme will be published in 2023.

■ Recycling: Standards**Daisy Cooper:**[\[86609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date the Government plans to publish the results of the consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling Collections in England.

Rebecca Pow:

A date for publication has not yet been set.

■ River Graveney: Sewage**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[83702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of raw sewage discharges on the River Graveney's eco-system.

Rebecca Pow:

This is the first government to take such significant steps to tackle sewage overflows, including those on the river Graveney. We have been clear to water companies that they must tackle sewage overflows urgently, and the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan will deliver the largest infrastructure investment in water company history to clean up our rivers. Under the Environment Act we have improved monitoring and the transparency of data related to sewage overflows. Event Duration Monitors will be fully rolled out by 2023. This will help monitor local sewage impacts and hold water companies to account to deliver rapid improvements.

■ River Tyne: Pollution Control**Mr Nicholas Brown:****[80611]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to improve water quality in the River Tyne.

Rebecca Pow:

Water quality in the River Tyne is influenced significantly by historical metal mines in the region. Defra and the Environment Agency (EA) are working in partnership with the Coal Authority on the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines Programme. The River Tyne is a priority for action. The [Nent Haggs mine water treatment scheme](#), expected to start operating in summer 2023, will capture up to 3 tonnes of zinc and cadmium each year and improve water quality in 60km of rivers. The similar scale [Nenthead mine water treatment scheme](#) is also being developed. This year, contaminated sediment containing about 0.3 tonnes of zinc, lead and cadmium was removed from two check-weirs, in the River Nent and River West Allen, decreasing the amount of metals accumulating in the Tyne Estuary sediments.

In August, we also launched the most ambitious plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows of any government. Our new strict targets will see the toughest ever crack down on sewage spills and will require water companies to secure the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. Our Plan will protect biodiversity, the ecology of our rivers and seas, and the public health of our water users for generations to come.

The EA will not hesitate to take the strongest enforcement action against polluters – up to and including prosecution, when this is required. The EA is currently conducting 2 investigations into pollution entering the River Tyne and both investigations have the potential to result in a prosecution.

■ Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare**Ruth Jones:****[89019]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how long an animal must be kept being protected under Schedule 4 of the Welfare at Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015.

Mark Spencer:

Animals are considered to be 'kept' for the purpose of Schedule 4 of the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 as soon as they are in control of a person. From that point, they will be subject to the provisions and protections of the legislation.

Ruth Jones: [\[89022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the requirement to amend the Welfare at Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 following the commencement of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.

Mark Spencer:

As part of our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, we are currently looking at a number of improvements that could be made to legislation and practice on welfare at killing.

Total Allowable Catches: Biofuels**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[88858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the UK's recommended Total Allowable Catches in its fishing negotiations with the EU, Norway and the North-East Atlantic coastal states comply with the biomass requirements for commercial stocks in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[88859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government is committed to not setting catch limits for any stocks in excess of scientific advice given by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) in its fishing negotiations with the EU, Norway and the North-East Atlantic coastal states.

Mark Spencer:

The UK advocates an approach towards setting Total Allowable Catches (TACs) that is founded on the best available scientific advice including from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) on achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). This compliments the United Kingdom Marine Strategy, which is the UK equivalent to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, that sets out a commitment to establish commercial stocks at a biomass level that are capable of producing MSY.

Waste Disposal: Crime**Ruth Jones:** [\[86605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the amount of waste managed illegally in England in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's National Waste Crime Survey in 2021 suggested that 18% of all waste was perceived to be illegally managed at some point. The second iteration of the survey due to be repeated in early 2023.

Estimating the amount of waste managed illegally in England is challenging due to the nature of the waste crime. Waste crime is geographically dispersed, involves a large number of groups and individuals who actively seek to avoid detection by the Environment Agency and where violence and intimidation to deter reporting can be common. The Environment Agency has begun to estimate this figure, and can only provide data for the last year. Earlier this year we consulted on our proposals for the implementation of mandatory digital waste tracking. Digital records of waste movements will allow regulators to detect when waste doesn't reach a site which is licenced to accept it, which may indicate illegal activity.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Academic Technology Approval Scheme****Steve McCabe:**[\[88805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the average wait time is for the approval of Academic Technology Approval Scheme accreditation.

Steve McCabe:[\[88806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the Academic Technology Approval Scheme backlog.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK takes its responsibility towards countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced conventional military technology seriously. The Academic Technology Approval Scheme is a thorough, necessary and proportionate tool to protect UK research from misappropriation and divergence to military programmes of concern. The majority of applications are processed within published timescales, which is 30 working days between April and September. We are aware that a small percentage of cases remain outside of target processing times and our teams are working to clear those. We continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and a planned IT upgrade should provide greater capability.

■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[92308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many FTE staff have been in the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative team of experts in each (a) calendar and (b) financial year since 2012.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of Experts is a roster of 28 independent specialists in sexual and gender-based violence, psychology and training, law and social work, hosted within the Civilian Stabilisation Group (CSG) of the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation (OCSM). Given it is a roster of deployable experts there are no full-time employees (FTE) in the PSVI Team of Experts. Members of the Team of Experts are contracted for specific pieces of work, which are advertised for recruitment through the CSG and are generally contracted on a self-employed basis. Deployments include supporting the development of FCDO policy and building capacities of governments, the UN and NGOs overseas. The Team of Experts has deployed over 90 times to countries such as Ukraine, Bangladesh, Uganda and Ethiopia.

The PSVI is made up of dedicated teams covering policy issues around conflict-related sexual violence and the PSVI international conference (temporary team). The PSVI sits within the Gender and Children in Conflict (GCiC) department, part of OCSM, and is supported by GCiC Social Development Advisers.

■ Armed Forces: Vehicles**Drew Hendry:**[\[89854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to prevent (a) individuals and (b) organisations based in (i) the UK and (ii) other countries that have sold military vehicles to Russia since its invasion of Ukraine from undertaking any economic activity within the UK.

Leo Docherty:

The UK, in coordination with our international partners has introduced several packages of increasingly hard-hitting sanctions that prohibit the provision of a wide range of services and goods, including military equipment, to Russia by UK individuals and organisations. On 20 October, the UK introduced sanctions that target Iranian individuals and a business responsible for supplying Russia with drones in contravention of UNSCR 2231. The UK Government does not speculate on specific future sanctions, as to do so could reduce their impact. We will continue the pressure against Putin and his regime, until Ukraine prevails or Putin ends his war of choice.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Diplomatic Service**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many requests for consular assistance overseas his Department received in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

The FCDO provided consular assistance in around 22,000 new cases in 2018 and 2019, 27,000 in 2020, 16,000 in 2021 and 18,000 so far in 2022. The FCDO also issued around 31,000 Emergency Travel Documents in 2018, 30,000 in 2019, 13,000 in 2020, 14,000 in 2021 and 28,000 so far in 2022. Requests for assistance, Emergency Travel Documents or other services are triaged, with the majority of queries resolved on first contact via our Consular Contact Centre without further assistance being required.

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many consular staff his Department employed in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

The total number of Consular and Crisis Directorate staff at the end of financial years 2017-18 to 2021-22 are as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONSULAR AND CRISIS DIRECTORATE HEADCOUNT
2017-18	840-859
2018-19	920-939
2019-20	880-899
2020-21	920-939
2021-22	900-919

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of his Department's total salary expenditure was spent on consular staff in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

Consular staffing accounts for an average of 13 percent of total legacy FCO salary expenditure over the last five years. Please see the table below for the breakdown across the five individual years.

FY2021-22	FY2020-21	FY2019-20	FY2018-19	FY2017-18
12%	15%	13%	13%	14%

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Government Procurement Card**

Mr David Lammy: [\[87719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's total expenditure made using Government Procurement Cards was in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

The Department's total expenditure made using Government Procurement Cards in each of the last five years:

FINANCIAL YEAR (APR-MAR)	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (GBP)
2022/2023 to date	31,771,408.65
2021/2022	38,900,114.81
2020/2021	31,517,913.17
2019/2020	40,200,041.60
2018/2019	33,796,943.41
2017/2018	29,164,521.38

Government Procurement Cards provide an efficient route to enable key staff to procure goods and services, necessary to the promotion of British interests overseas and the maintenance of our embassies and high commissions. All purchases are subject to authorisation by managers and audit checks. Local budgets are scrutinised for waste, and fraud is monitored by our audit teams to ensure best value to the tax payer.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy Pay**

Mr David Lammy: [\[87717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has paid in severance payments to former special advisers in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

The provision of severance payments for special advisers is set out in the Model Contract, which is available on gov.uk, including provisions for repayment of

severance if reappointed. The cost of severance payments made to special advisers across government is published annually by the Cabinet Office.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Travel

Mr David Lammy:

[\[87718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on Ministerial overseas travel in each of the last fifteen years.

David Rutley:

The FCDO fulfils the requirement, established since 2010, for government departments to publish transparency data in line with the Ministerial Code. The full set of FCDO published transparency returns, which include ministerial overseas travel costs (since the department's formation in September 2020), can be found at: FCDO: ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Historic transparency data detailing ministerial overseas travel for the Department for International Development can be found at: DFID ministers' gifts, hospitality travel and meetings with external organisations - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Similarly, ministerial overseas travel data for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can be found at: FCO ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Indo-Pacific Region

Sarah Champion:

[\[88890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which countries his Department includes in its definition of the Indo-Pacific region.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Indo-Pacific Directorate-General in the FCDO has lead responsibility for relations with the following countries and territories: India and Indian Ocean (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), North East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea (DPRK), South Korea (RoK), Taiwan), South East Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam) and Oceania (Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). There is close coordination with other departments leading work on neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and Afghanistan.

■ Iran: Unmanned Air Vehicles**Mr David Lammy:**[\[87727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to help prevent Iranian drones being used by Russian forces in Ukraine.

David Rutley:

The UK condemns Iranian support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has made this clear to Iran including when the Foreign Secretary summoned the Iranian chargé d'affaires to the FCDO on 3 October. Iran's supply of drones to Russia is in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The UK, alongside France and Germany, raised this in a letter to the UN Secretary General where we supported the Ukrainian call for an investigation into Iran's supply of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia. On 20 October new UK sanctions targeted Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. We will continue to work with the international community to hold Iran and Russia to account.

■ Jagtar Singh Johal**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[84804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many meetings he has held with his Indian counterpart regarding the case of Jagtar Singh Johal in the last 12 months.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Foreign Secretary discussed Mr Johal's case with the Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, in Delhi on 29 October. The previous Foreign Secretary raised Mr Johal's case with Dr Jaishankar during her visits to India on 31 March 2022, and 22 October 2021. The Former Prime Minister Johnson also raised the case with Prime Minister Modi during his visit to Delhi on 22 April. The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon regularly raises this case, and did so most recently with the Indian High Commissioner to the UK on 25 October.

■ Julian Assange**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[89033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he or his officials have had discussions with their counterparts in the US Administration on reported attempts to assassinate Julian Assange.

David Rutley:

We have discussed issues relating to Julian Assange as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US. We are not aware of any specific discussions on the specific issue of reported assassination attempts.

Kenny MacAskill:[\[89035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any people working on Operation Pelican were based within his Department's premises.

David Rutley:

Operation Pelican was led by the Metropolitan Police. No Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials were directly assigned to work on Operation Pelican. During this time, officials in my Department continued to manage the diplomatic relationship between the UK and Ecuador.

Sanctions**Neil Coyle:**[\[87854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has received recent representations from other countries seeking sanctions against specific (a) individuals and (b) organisations.

Leo Docherty:

The UK continues to engage extensively with international partners to coordinate sanctions. We do not provide a running commentary on our conversations with partners, and do not comment on future sanctions as this could blunt their impact.

Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[87934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made dispersing the Government's commitment of £100 million to the Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

At COP26, the UK announced a £100m commitment to support the work of the Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance, making it quicker and easier for developing countries to get the finance they need. This is supporting trials of new approaches to accessing climate finance underway in Bangladesh, Fiji, Jamaica, Uganda and Rwanda, responding to national priorities set out by these countries.

At COP27, the UK announced that £7m from the overall commitment will support Rwanda's new Green Investment Facility. In Uganda, the UK has helped establish a new Climate Finance Unit within the Ministry of Finance. An Annual Report on the Taskforce, also funded from the UK's commitment, was published during COP27, setting out broader achievements by climate finance providers and recipients during the first year of the Taskforce.

■ Tigray: Peace Negotiations**Fleur Anderson:**[\[89045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the (a) rebuilding of schools, hospitals and water and sanitation services and (b) peace building work by local organisations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We welcome the agreements signed between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on 2 November and 12 November. Along with other international partners, the UK has underlined to the Ethiopian Government and African Union its willingness to provide support to this process. In the last eighteen months the UK has provided almost £90 million to support vulnerable crisis-affected communities across Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Somali regions. As part of this, the recently announced £14 million package of support is expected to reach up to 150,000 people with comprehensive health, water sanitation, hygiene and nutrition services; 50,000 people with emergency financial support and 20,000 pupils with emergency education.

■ Ukraine: Aviation**Chi Onwurah:**[\[90795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that the people convicted of the murder of people on Flight MH17 are brought to justice.

Leo Docherty:

The conviction of three individuals in relation to the downing of Flight MH17 is an important step in securing justice for the victims and their families. We thank the Dutch authorities and the Joint Investigation Team for their work on this complex case. The downing of MH17 was a violation of international norms, which keep our societies safe, and serves as a reminder of the human cost of Russia's actions in Ukraine over many years. The UK Government will continue to support the Dutch authorities in their efforts to ensure those responsible are held to account.

■ Vladimir Kara-Murza**Tony Lloyd:**[\[89748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received representations from relevant stakeholders on the imprisonment of British citizen Vladimir Kara-Murza in Russia.

Tony Lloyd:[\[89749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Russian Government on the case of British citizen Vladimir Kara-Murza who is imprisoned in Russia.

Leo Docherty:

British Embassy officials have attended Vladimir Kara-Murza's court hearings with other international partners, the last hearing being 24 October. We remain vigilant to attempts by the Russian government to exclude diplomats from future court hearings following Mr Kara-Murza's additional treason charge. HMA Moscow raised the issue of consular access with the Russian MFA. In May, the Foreign Secretary met Mr Kara-Murza's wife, in his previous role as Minister for Europe, and emphasised his determination to continue raising Mr Kara-Murza's case at multilateral fora, including the OSCE. We note the Canadian government's sanctions relating to Mr Kara-Murza. We do not comment on future sanctions designations.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Ambulance Services: North East****Wes Streeting:**[\[89870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the results of the independent review of the North East Ambulance Service.

Maria Caulfield:

The independent review has been commissioned with oversight from NHS England. Dame Marianne Griffiths was appointed as Chair in August 2022 and we expect the review to conclude in late 2022. A report will be published in due course.

■ Antenatal Care: Physiotherapy**Feryal Clark:**[\[89074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of pelvic physiotherapists required for perinatal pelvic health services.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific estimate has been made. NHS England's baseline assessments from a majority of systems in England implementing perinatal pelvic health services has demonstrated significant regional variation in existing pelvic health physiotherapy staffing.

An objective of perinatal pelvic health services is to increase the number of pelvic health physiotherapists and reduce this variation to ensure that all women receive timely access to care according to guidance by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. These are currently being established in two-thirds of integrated care systems. As of September 2022, there are an additional 40 pelvic health physiotherapists with further recruitment expected ahead of the full national deployment from 2023.

■ Building the Right Support Delivery Board

Barbara Keeley: [\[92150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who the members of the Building the Right Support Delivery Board are.

Barbara Keeley: [\[92151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times the Building the Right Support Delivery Board has met since 15 March 2022; and how many times a Minister has attended those meetings.

Barbara Keeley: [\[92152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how long each meeting of the Building the Right Support Delivery Board lasted since February 2021.

Maria Caulfield:

The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has met three times since 15 March 2022. A Minister attended all of these meetings apart from September, where the meeting took place in the national period of mourning, in accordance with the Government's guidance. Each meeting since February 2021 has lasted for one hour. Meetings from December 2022 onwards are expected to last for an hour and a half. The membership of the Building the Right Support Delivery Board is as follows:

- Autism Programme Director, NHS England;
- Chair of the Association of Directors of Children's Services' Health, Care and Additional Needs Policy Committee;
- Chair of the Children and Young People's Steering Group;
- Chair of the Independent Care (Education) Treatment Reviews Oversight Panel;
- Chief Executive Officer, Skills for Care;
- Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission;
- Chief Nurse, Health Education England;
- Chief Social Worker, Department of Health and Social Care;
- Co-chairs of the Advisory Group of People with Lived Experience;
- Deputy Chief Executive, Local Government Association;
- Deputy Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care, Care Quality Commission;
- Deputy Director of Female Offenders and Health Policy, Ministry of Justice;
- Deputy Director of Housing with Care and Support, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;
- Deputy Director of Neurodiversity, Disability and Learning Disability, Department of Health and Social Care;

- Deputy Director Operational Research and Statistician, Department of Health and Social Care;
- Director – Adult Social Care Policy, Department of Health and Social Care;
- Director of Mental Health and Disabilities and Enhanced Protection Programme, Department of Health and Social Care;
- Director of Policy for Mental Health and Learning Disability and Autism, NHS England;
- Director of SEND and Alternative Provision, Department for Education;
- Director Youth Justice and Offender Policy, Ministry of Justice;
- Head of Children and Young People, NHS England;
- Head of Disability and Work Opportunities, Department for Work and Pensions;
- Head of Operations for Mental Health and Learning Disability and Autism, NHS England;
- National Clinical Director for Learning Disability and Autism, NHS England;
- National Director for Social Care, Ofsted;
- National Director of Learning Disability and Autism, NHS England;
- President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services;
- Representative of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner;
- Representatives of the Health and Wellbeing Alliance, Voluntary and Community Sector; and
- Representatives of the Provider Group.

■ Cancer: Diagnosis

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[89894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what percentage of cases are meeting the Faster Diagnosis Standard for cancer diagnoses.

Helen Whately:

As of September 2022, the Faster Diagnosis Standard for cancer diagnoses was met for 67.2% of patients.

■ Cancer: Diagnosis and Medical Treatments

Jim Shannon:

[\[92209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help speed up (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of cancer.

Helen Whately:

We have established 91 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) to allow patients to benefit from earlier diagnostic tests closer to home, including for cancer. We will

deliver up to 160 CDCs to allow the National Health Service to undertake up to 17 million tests by March 2025, with capacity for a further nine million per year once fully operational. NHS England has committed to ensuring that 95% of patients requiring a diagnostic test will receive it within six weeks by March 2025.

In September 2022, there were more than 250,000 urgent general practitioner referrals and approximately 50,000 people had their first or subsequent treatment for cancer in September 2022, which equates to 104% of pre-pandemic levels. More than nine out of 10 people starting their first treatment for the disease do so within one month of receiving the decision to treat.

■ Cancer: Radiotherapy

Dan Carden: [\[92318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve access to radiotherapy for patients waiting for cancer treatment.

Helen Whately:

In 2019/20, 11 radiotherapy networks were established in England to improve workforce resilience and increase patient access to specialist skills and knowledge. Since 2016, more than £160 million has been invested in radiotherapy equipment to ensure local access to innovative treatments, including the replacement or upgrade of approximately 100 radiotherapy treatment machines.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[92156\]](#)

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

Dan Carden: [\[92319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take reduce the number of cancer patients waiting longer than 62 days from receipt of urgent GP referral for suspected cancer to first treatment of cancer.

Helen Whately:

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service 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 provide earlier diagnostic tests closer to home, including for cancer diagnoses.

Dan Carden: [\[92320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out a timescale for tackling the cancer treatment backlog.

Helen Whately:

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. The plan states the ambition that the number of people waiting more than 62 days to start treatment following suspected cancer will return to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023. 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, including cancer services.

Care Homes and Hospitals: Power Failures**Angela Rayner:**[\[88892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that (a) hospitals, (b) hospices and (c) care homes are included in the protected site list under the Electricity Emergency Supply Code.

Neil O'Brien:

We are working with the health and social care sectors to encourage understanding of eligibility and ensure that eligible sites are included on the protected sites list, in line with published guidance.

Care Quality Commission**Rachael Maskell:**[\[87878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission in facilitating change where there have been systemic failings in the health and care sector.

Maria Caulfield:

As the independent regulator of health and social care in England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ensures health and social care services provide safe, effective, compassionate, high quality care and encourages care services to improve. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008, the CQC has powers to undertake special or thematic reviews or investigations under section 48 when instructed by the Secretary of State, where the failings are systemic. Following thematic reviews, the CQC can make recommendations to the appropriate bodies.

Where there are systemic failings in an individual provider, the CQC will use enforcement powers, including issuing warning notices, imposing conditions or cancelling the registration of the provider. The CQC can recommend for a National Health Service trust to be placed in the recovery support programme and works closely with NHS England to monitor actions and improvements. The Health and Care Act 2022 will provide the CQC with new powers to assess integrated care systems (ICSs) and local authorities for delivering its duties under the Care Act 2014. The CQC will use its single assessment framework to ensure a consistent approach to regulation across providers, ICSs and local authorities.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission to bring about culture change in organisations that have been noted as requiring such change in their reports.

Maria Caulfield:

During inspections, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) reviews an organisation's leadership, management and governance to ensure that high quality care is provided, it encourages learning and innovation and an open and fair culture is promoted.

The CQC is currently working with NHS England to develop a new single assessment framework for providers and systems in all sectors which it regulates. The new framework will simplify the CQC's existing assessment frameworks to improve accessibility and connect to the relevant regulations. The CQC will strengthen its focus in safety culture; reflecting and responding to people's experiences and expectations; addressing health inequalities; accelerating improvement and partnership working in health and social care services; and respond to the recommendations of the Messenger Review on compassionate and capable leadership and workforce equality, diversity and inclusion.

■ **Care Workers: Training**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[92174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the need for clear standards for evidence-based training for the social care workforce.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Continuing Care: Standards**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[92327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve continuing health care in the NHS to ensure that those living with conditions such as Huntington's disease are adequately cared for throughout their life and do not have to reapply for support.

Helen Whately:

NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) eligibility is not condition or diagnosis specific. When an individual is in receipt of CHC, national guidance stipulates that their care plan should be reviewed at least once a year, to ensure their needs continue to be met appropriately. The frequency of the reviews should be proportionate to the circumstances. In the majority of cases and where needs remain complex, there will be no need to reassess an individual's eligibility for CHC as part of these reviews.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[90727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the latest date is by which all manufacturers of Covid-19 vaccines used in the UK must meet the conditions of their Conditional Marketing Authorisations.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: The following table shows the latest date by which manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccines used in the United Kingdom have a Conditional Marketing Authorisation.

SPIKEVAX	31 DECEMBER 2023
Spikevax bivalent original/Omicron BA.1	30 September 2024
Nuvaxovid	31 January 2023
Vaxzevria	31 March 2024

■ Dementia: Social Services

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[92175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people living with dementia are involved in the planning and provision of their care.

Helen Whately:

Guidance in 'NHS England Dementia: Good Personalised Care and Support Planning Information for primary care providers and commissioners' indicates that care planning and reviews should always be completed with the person living with dementia and their family/carers as appropriate, to reflect the persons wishes and needs. The guide was developed with a range of people living with dementia and their carers.

■ Dental Services: Finance

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[90758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department is taking to (a) ensure a fair funding system for NHS dental practices and (b) increase the number of NHS dentists.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England invests £3 billion in dentistry each year, with decisions on priorities made within the overall National Health Service budget. Health Education England has undertaken a three-year review of education and training, which is being implemented through the Dental Education Reform Programme to improve recruitment and retention.

In July 2022, we announced measures to reform NHS dental services to increase access for patients and remunerate dentists fairly for caring for patients with complex needs. We are also working with NHS England and the sector on longer-term improvements to make NHS dentistry a more appealing place to work. During the last quarter of 2021, a one-off additional £50 million was made available for NHS dental services to allow those patients unable to obtain an NHS appointment access to dental care.

■ Dental Services: Liverpool

Dan Carden:

[\[92321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by Healthwatch Liverpool entitled The state of NHS dentistry in Liverpool, published on 18 November 2022, what recent discussions his Department has had with local stakeholders on improving access to dental care in Liverpool.

Neil O'Brien:

There have been no recent discussions. However, NHS England asked dental practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July 2022, including in Liverpool. In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care, including in Liverpool.

The plan includes improvements to ensure dentists are remunerated fairly for more complex work, allowing greater flexibility to reallocate resources and to utilise dentists with greater capacity to deliver National Health Service treatment, whilst enabling full use of the dental team. The plan also includes streamlining processes for overseas dentists and holding the local NHS to account for dentistry provision. In addition, Health Education England is also reforming dental education to improve the recruitment and retention of dental professionals.

■ Dental Services: Waiting Lists

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[90757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to address the dental appointment backlog.

Neil O'Brien:

In July 2022, we announced improvements to the National Health Service dental system to improve access for patients and address backlogs in dental care. This included guidance on the frequency for patients attending check-ups.

An additional £50 million was made available for NHS dentistry in the final quarter of 2021/22 to allow more patients access to dental care and reduce backlogs. The available appointments were targeted at those most in need of urgent dental treatment, vulnerable groups and children.

■ Dialysis Machines

Karin Smyth:

[\[89852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of Dialysis Away from Base (DAFB) provision for renal patients who have work or other commitments distant from their home.

Helen Whately:

NHS England has completed an analysis of access to Dialysis Away from Base (DAFB) services in England and found that some trust providers are not supporting access if there is no capacity within the host unit. NHS England will work with renal clinical networks to maintain oversight of access to DAFB and understand any regional issues affecting access.

■ Epilepsy: Death

Cherilyn Mackrory:

[\[87991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce unexpected deaths as a result of epilepsy.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence issues guidance for healthcare professionals and commissioners and the NHS RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit provides expert advice on improving support for people living with epilepsy. The New Medicine Service allows an expanded role for pharmacies in supporting those with epilepsy and other conditions, including potential harms caused by non-adherence to medicines.

■ Essential Tremor: Liverpool

Kim Johnson:

[\[88025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate she has made of (a) the number of patients affected by Essential Tremor in Liverpool and (b) how many of those patients will receive magnetic resonance-guided focused ultrasound treatment for that condition in financial year 2022-23.

Paula Barker:

[\[88026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when a second provider will be commissioned for MR-guided focused ultrasound in the (a) North and (b) south of England.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made regarding the number of patients with essential tremor in Liverpool. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust provide this treatment in England and meet patient demand. There are no current plans to expand the number of providers.

Peter Dowd: [\[92245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of patients in the Liverpool area who will be treated by MR-Guided Focussed Ultrasound for Essential Tremor in 2022.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Food: Children**

Matt Vickers: [\[92381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 80961 on Nutrition, whether he has made an estimate of the levels of consumption by children of products containing over 50 per cent of fruit, nuts and seeds.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **General Practitioners: Telephone Services**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[90851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage general practices to call patients a second time when they miss an initial telephone appointment.

Neil O'Brien:

Individual general practitioner (GP) practices are responsible for managing appointment booking systems to meet the reasonable needs of registered patients. NHS England's guidance advises GP practices to provide a specific timeframe or exact appointment time for telephone or video appointments.

■ **Health Professions**

Jim Shannon: [\[92211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 17 November, Official Report, col 849, what plans he has to ensure funding of the forthcoming independently verified plan for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals.

Will Quince:

We have committed to publishing a National Health Service workforce plan in due course. This will include independently verified forecasts for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals required in future years, taking account of improvements in retention and productivity. The plan is currently being developed by NHS England and is due for completion by the end of 2022/23. The long-term workforce plan will be used to inform how we can meet the needs of patients and the

NHS workforce. Funding plans beyond the current Spending Review period will be subject to the outcome of future Spending Reviews.

■ Health: Children

Alex Sobel: [\[90880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address child health inequalities.

Neil O'Brien:

In November 2022, NHS England published 'Core20PLUS5 – An approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people'. This defines a target population cohort and identifies five clinical areas requiring accelerated improvement: asthma; diabetes; epilepsy; oral health; and mental health.

There are a range of universal public health interventions and guidance for those aged 0 to 19 years old which provide universal support and identify further needs and safeguarding concerns. We also deliver programmes targeted at particular populations, including Family Nurse Partnership to support vulnerable young mothers, the Healthy Start scheme for low-income families and Mental Health Support Teams in schools.

■ Health: Weather

Wes Streeting: [\[88958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact of additional cost of living pressures in winter 2022-23 on trends in the level of (a) illness and (b) mortality.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: We are working across Government and with external partners to identify those most vulnerable to the impacts of the increased cost of living and any further action which can be taken in winter 2022/23.

■ Hospitals: Buildings

Wes Streeting: [\[89872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete will have been completely removed from the NHS estate.

Will Quince:

The Government is committed to the removal of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) from the National Health Service estate by 2035 and protecting patient and staff safety in the interim period. We have allocated £685 million to mitigate the risks posed by this material. We are working with the worst affected trusts to determine the best approach to eradicating RAAC, including replacing two hospitals in the New Hospital Programme.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists**Wes Streeting:** [\[89874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of NHS waiting lists on sickness-related economic inactivity.

Will Quince:

No formal assessment has been made.

■ Housing: Health**Jim Shannon:** [\[88874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the potential number of excess deaths in winter 2022-23 due to unhealthy housing; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates excess winter deaths (EWDs) retrospectively by comparing the number of deaths which occurred in December to March, with the average of the preceding and subsequent four-month periods.

However, the ONS does not estimate the number of EWDs specifically attributed to unhealthy homes and the Department does not model this on a prospective basis.

■ Huntington's Disease: Prescriptions**Stephen Morgan:** [\[92325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of permitting patients in the middle and later stages of Huntington's disease to be entitled to free prescriptions.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Hyperactivity: Mental Health Services**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[89768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce NHS waiting times for ADHD assessments.

Maria Caulfield:

We expect integrated care boards and National Health Service trusts to have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management'. The guideline does not recommend a maximum waiting time standard from referral for an assessment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or from assessment to the point of diagnosis. It aims to improve diagnosis and the quality of care and support which people receive. Consultant-led mental health services are included in the NHS 18-week maximum waiting time.

Assessments for ADHD may be undertaken in a variety of care settings and there is currently no single established dataset to monitor the number of assessments nationally. NHS Digital is working to improve the quality of relevant datasets, such as the Mental Health Services and the Community Services Datasets.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Wes Streeting:

[\[86659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients aged 65 years or older have been inappropriately given the QIVe flu vaccine in the South East since 20 September 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 17 November 2022]: NHS England has identified a very small number of patients aged 65 years old and over who have not received the recommended flu vaccine for the age group. NHS England has written to providers to reiterate the recommended vaccines for each cohort. Local National Health Service teams are working with those providers where this has occurred to see if it is appropriate to invite those affected for a further flu vaccine dose.

The information requested is not currently held centrally. NHS regional teams are working with the relevant providers to establish further information.

■ Integrated Care Systems

Sir George Howarth:

[\[80608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to enable local NHS leadership teams to help support medical technology and innovation within Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The forthcoming Medtech Strategy will be published shortly and acknowledges innovation as a priority area. We will work with the National Health Service and other stakeholders to implement the Strategy. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to accelerate the uptake of selected innovative medical devices, diagnostics and digital products to patients faster by developing the MedTech funding mandate.

■ Liver Diseases: Preventive Medicine

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[88857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help (a) early diagnosis and (b) prevention of liver disease.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Alcohol identification and brief advice (IBA) is undertaken through the NHS Health Check. Where appropriate, individuals are given advice on reducing alcohol consumption or referred to specialist support. IBA is also

included at new general practitioner registrations and within the standard contract for secondary care.

We are piloting community liver health checks in 12 areas to provide earlier identification of patients with liver disease. Since April 2022, NHS England has introduced a new Commissioning for Quality and Innovation indicator to incentivise testing for cirrhosis or advanced liver fibrosis for alcohol-dependent in-patients in acute and mental health services. We also have a range of approaches and interventions to address the major risk factors for liver disease, including addressing obesity and preventing hepatitis C.

■ Mechanical Thrombectomy

Sir Robert Neill: [\[89777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 89536 on Mechanical Thrombectomy, how many of the 150 whole time equivalent interventional neuroradiologists required to deliver resilient and sustainable thrombectomy services have been recruited since 20 December 2021.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[89778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 20 December 2021 to Question 89536 on Mechanical Thrombectomy, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the number of whole time equivalent interventional neuroradiologists identified as practising in England in the Royal College of Radiologists Clinical radiology census report 2021.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[89780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of interventional radiology services and thrombectomy services in trusts and health boards in 2021.

Helen Whately:

Individual National Health Service employers are responsible for ensuring the appropriate staff are trained and competent to undertake mechanical thrombectomy. A credential for mechanical thrombectomy has now been agreed with the General Medical Council to allow interventional radiologists, cardiologists, neurosurgeons and stroke physicians to be trained to deliver medical treatment for stroke.

From 2016 to 2021 there has been a 63% increase in entry points in clinical radiology specialty training places. As of July 2022, there were 5,040 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the NHS in England in the sub-specialism of clinical radiology, an increase of 5.7% since July 2021 and 55.4% since July 2010. This includes doctors in training grades, specialists and doctors on other contracts. The consultant clinical radiologist workforce has also increased by 4.3% since July 2021 and 53.7% since July 2010.

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[89783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much capital investment funding has been allocated to expanding mechanical thrombectomy services in each of the last 5 years.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Mental Health Services

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[87931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what meetings Ministers in his Department have had with the Care Quality Commission on mental health services since 25 October 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: We are due to meet with representatives from the Care Quality Commission later in November to discuss a range of issues, including mental health services.

■ Mental Health Services: Weather

Wes Streeting:

[\[88959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of additional cost of living pressures in winter 2022-23 on (a) mental health and (b) mental health services.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: We are working across Government and with external partners to identify those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of increased cost of living and any further support which can be provided.

NHS England has allocated a further £1.5 billion to integrated care systems to address the rising costs of energy and inflation and integrated care boards will determine how this funding will be allocated to meet the needs of local populations. In addition, NHS England is providing an additional £10 million to support mental health services in winter 2022/23.

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 an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to expand NHS mental health services.

■ Neurology: Staff**Sir Robert Neill:**[\[89775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to invest in the interventional neuroradiology workforce to help the treatment medical conditions such as stroke.

Sir Robert Neill:[\[89776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) his Department and (b) NHS England have held recent discussions with (i) neuroradiologists and (ii) other professionals involved in thrombectomy services on the development of a stroke workforce plan.

Helen Whately:

A credential for mechanical thrombectomy has now been agreed with the General Medical Council to allow interventional radiologists, cardiologists, neurosurgeons and stroke physicians to be trained to deliver medical treatment for stroke. From 2016 to 2021 there has been a 63% increase in entry points in clinical radiology specialty training places.

■ NHS: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**Jim Shannon:**[\[92207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase the size of and (b) improve retention in the NHS workforce.

Will Quince:

We aim to deliver an additional 50,000 nurses by the end of March 2024, with over 29,000 more nurses currently working in the National Health Service compared to September 2019. Since September 2020, all eligible nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students have received a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year. Additional funding is also available for studying certain courses, with further financial support available for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel. The Government has funded a further 1,500 medical school places each year for domestic students in England and the first graduates from this expansion entered foundation training in August 2022. This has also delivered five new medical schools in England.

NHS England's retention programme seeks to understand why staff leave and provide targeted interventions to support staff to stay, with each trust required to have retention action plans to target support locally. In July 2022, NHS England asked each NHS organisation to prioritise the delivery of five actions on nursing and midwifery retention, including enhanced support for those joining the NHS, menopause support and improved advice and guidance for those later in their career with flexible working and pensions. 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.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[84829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will hold discussions with representatives of third sector organisations on the NHS workforce plan.

Will Quince:

The Government has committed to publishing a comprehensive workforce plan next year. NHS England is currently developing the plan and is engaging with a broad range of stakeholders.

■ **NHS: Workplace Pensions**

Feryal Clark:

[\[86638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the British Medical Association on the potential impact of his policies on flexible accrual for NHS pensions on the retention of senior clinicians in the NHS.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: I attended recent discussions between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the British Medical Association, during which the potential impact of flexible accrual was raised. I also met separately with the Deputy Chair of the British Medical Association.

■ **Nurses: York Central**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to ensure that nurses are adequately housed, including in York Central constituency, in light of rising costs of residential accommodation.

Will Quince:

The provision of accommodation for nurses is managed locally between National Health Service trusts and employees. NHS England has made a £700,000 fund available to support trusts to provide accommodation for newly recruited international nurses. This fund is being used to reflect the differing accommodation challenges in regions and any outcomes will inform national toolkits and guidance.

■ **Obesity**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[87788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many meetings he has had with obesity prevention (a) charities and (b) organisations since his appointment.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: There have been no such meetings. Ministerial meetings are published on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-overseas-travel-and-meetings#2022>

■ Oral Tobacco**Mr David Jones:****[92135]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Dr Javed Khan's review into Smokefree 2030 policies, what steps he is taking to implement that report's recommendation to facilitate access to oral nicotine pouches.

Neil O'Brien:

Nicotine pouches are widely available in the United Kingdom. However, there is limited research and evidence into the harms of nicotine pouches and the ability to support attempts to stop smoking. The Department has requested the Committee on Toxicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) to review the evidence on the use of oral nicotine pouches and the assessment of risk to users. The COT has published a discussion paper and will publish a position statement once the review is complete.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Education**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[90870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to raise awareness of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: NHS England's 'Help Us, Help You' campaign seeks to address the barriers which may deter patients from seeking advice for potential symptoms of cancer, such as pancreatic cancer. A campaign focusing on abdominal and urological symptoms launched on 31 October 2022 and addresses symptoms of pancreatic cancer.

■ Pregnancy: Drugs**Feryal Clark:****[85033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of the findings in the report entitled MBRRACE Missing Voices Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care: Lay Summary 2022 on the number of women dying from pre-eclampsia; and whether he is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the report by the University of Birmingham and Birmingham Health Partners entitled Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future report, published in May 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. However, we have commissioned 14 maternal medicine networks in England, which will ensure access to specialist management and care for women with chronic and acute medical problems in pregnancy.

We welcome the report 'Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future' and its recommendations on overcoming barriers to investment and participation in research into medications in pregnancy. The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The '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, including pregnancy and maternity.

The NIHR has published guidance from the INCLUDE project which aims to improve the inclusion of groups with lower representation in research and clinical trials, 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. The Department is also hosting a meeting with researchers later this year to address the under-representation of women in research, including pregnant women.

Feryal Clark:[\[85035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to hold discussions with representatives from the pharmaceutical industry on the findings of the report entitled Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future published in May 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

While there are no plans for any specific discussions, the Department has noted the recommendations made in the report. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency recently completed a public consultation on legislative powers to support diversity in clinical trial populations, including pregnancy and individuals who are breast feeding. The responses are being analysed and the Government's response will be published later this year.

The Clinical Practice Research Datalink is currently being developed to study the safety of medicines use in pregnancy via a new expanded Pregnancy Register. This includes anonymised data on 24.5 million pregnancy episodes in seven million women. The Registry will increase the ability to study rare exposures and outcomes and improve healthcare advice for women.

Feryal Clark:[\[85037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of the report entitled Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future, published May 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department has noted the recommendations of the report. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency recently completed a public consultation on legislative powers to support diversity in clinical trial populations, including pregnancy and individuals who are breast feeding. The submissions are being analysed and the Government's response will be published later this year.

The Clinical Practice Research Datalink is currently being developed as a resource for studying the safety of medicines use in pregnancy via a new expanded Pregnancy Register. This includes anonymised data on 24.5 million pregnancy episodes in seven million women. The Registry will increase the ability to study rare exposures and outcomes and improve healthcare advice for women.

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR's 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027' has been designed to address inequalities associated with the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010, including pregnancy and maternity. The NIHR has published guidance to improve the inclusion of population groups with lower representation in research and clinical trials, such as pregnant women. The NIHR has commissioned research into maternal and neonatal health, focusing on the safety of maternity services. The Department will also host a discussion with researchers on addressing the under-representation of women in research, including pregnant women.

■ Public Health: Weather**Wes Streeting:**[\[92289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on potential risks to public health during winter 2022-23.

Neil O'Brien:

We regularly engage with Cabinet colleagues to discuss a range of issues, including public health. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) monitors data on epidemiological and disease impacts and has detailed plans to prepare for and respond to health threats. These include COVID-19, influenza and other health threats such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus, avian flu, norovirus and other gastrointestinal viruses.

The UKHSA, in collaboration with NHS England, the Local Government Association, the Met Office and the Department, has published 'The Cold Weather Plan for England: Protecting health and reducing harm from cold weather' for 2022/23. The Plan aims to prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of cold weather by alerting people to the negative health effects and to prepare and respond appropriately.

■ Radiology

Sir Robert Neill:

[R] [\[89781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure hospitals offer 24/7 access to interventional radiology services.

Will Quince:

In England, 34 National Health Service acute trusts currently provide 24 hours a day, seven days a week access to interventional radiology (IR) services. Where necessary, patients are diverted to trusts which deliver these services. National IR services are supported by an imaging network, which will develop alongside services as provision increases.

■ Radiotherapy

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[92158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of capacity in the NHS for radiotherapy; and whether he has taken recent steps to increase the level of capacity for radiotherapy.

Helen Whately:

In 2019/20, 11 radiotherapy networks were established in England to increase access to specialist skills and improve patient outcomes.

Since 2016, over £160 million has been invested in radiotherapy equipment, which has replaced or upgraded approximately 100 radiotherapy treatment machines.

■ Smoking

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[92139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local authorities have a specialist stop smoking service open to all smokers in their area.

Neil O'Brien:

According to 'Reaching Out: Tobacco control and stop smoking services in local authorities in England, 2021' published by Action on Smoking and Health and Cancer Research UK, of 150 local authorities, 90% provide a universal stop smoking offer and 9% provide stop smoking support to targeted populations.

Peter Dowd:

[\[92244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November to Question 74727 on Smoking, if he will publish data on whether England is on schedule to achieve or exceed targets on adult smoking.

Neil O'Brien:

In the 2017 Tobacco Control Plan, the Government set the ambition for adult smoking rates in England to reduce to 12% or less by the end 2022. In 2011 rates were 19.8%, and in 2019 rates were 13.9%. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data from

2020 is not comparable to previous years. However, based on the trend to 2019, we expect to meet our 2022 target.

National smoking prevalence data for 2022 will be available in 2023 through the Office for National Statistics' 'Adult smoking habits in the UK' publication.

■ Social Services: Finance

Daisy Cooper: [\[63341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is her Department's policy to increase funding for adult social care by £13 billion in the next financial year.

Helen Whately:

As announced in the autumn statement, the Government is making up to an additional £2.8 billion available in 2023/24 and £4.7 billion in 2024/25 to support adult social care and discharge.

Ben Bradley: [\[72448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to delay the charging reforms for social care in order to help Local Authorities to manage the costs and pressures of care delivery.

Ben Bradley: [\[72449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will provide funding to fully cover the additional costs of (a) changing the social care charging regime and (b) increasing the number of people eligible for local authority care.

Helen Whately:

We have listened to the concerns of local government and have taken the difficult decision to delay the planned adult social care charging reforms from October 2023 to October 2025. The funding intended for implementation will be retained in local authority budgets to meet current pressures.

■ Speech and Language Therapy: Children

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[86550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support families whose children are undergoing speech and language therapy.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2020, Public Health England, the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education published guidance on providing the best start in speech, language and communication. This guidance encourages local commissioners and service leads to take a family-centred approach and to ensure appropriate support is in place for parents, carers and families.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[86552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to speech and language therapy for children.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[86553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department have taken to improve the availability of one on one speech and language therapy for children.

Maria Caulfield:

The 'SEND review: right support, right place, right time' green paper sets out proposals to commission analysis to ensure that the health needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported through effective workforce planning. We propose to work with Health Education England, NHS England and the Department for Education to understand the demand for support for children and young people with SEND from the therapy and diagnostic workforce.

To increase the supply of more speech and language therapists to the National Health Service, since September 2020 all eligible allied health profession can apply for a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year, with further financial support available for childcare, accommodation and travel costs.

■ **Strokes: Ambulance Services**

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[89774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of average ambulance response times in 2022 on (a) stroke survival rates, (b) rates of permanent disability following a stroke and (c) timely access to mechanical thrombectomy for stroke patients.

Will Quince:

Category 2 calls are 'emergency' calls, including serious time-sensitive incidents such as strokes and heart attacks.

There is evidence that mechanical thrombectomy performed within six hours of the onset of symptoms can reduce brain damage and prevent or limit long-term disability. NHS England has allocated an additional £150 million for ambulance services in 2022/23, supporting improvements to response times through additional call handler recruitment, retention and other funding requirements.

NHS England is implementing video triage in ambulances for stroke patients. This provides a video consultation from home or in an ambulance with a hospital-based stroke clinician to advise paramedics on the appropriate action for the patient, such as thrombectomy or the relevant hospital for treatment.

■ **Strokes: Health Services**

Sir Robert Neill:

[\[89773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Long Term Plan, what recent progress his Department has made towards (a) the target for 10

per cent of stroke patients to receive a mechanical thrombectomy and (b) other targets within that plan for stroke care.

Helen Whately:

Thrombectomy is available in 24 centres in England and two non-neuroscience centres are currently under development. The latest available data shows that 3.1% of patients are receiving a thrombectomy following a stroke. The Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme reported that between April 2021 and March 2022, 75% of patients spent at least 90% of their hospital stay on a specialist stroke unit.

■ **Strokes: Medical Treatments**

Julian Knight:

[\[88911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by the Stroke Association entitled Saving Brains, published on 9 August 2022.

Helen Whately:

NHS England has noted the Stroke Association's report. The National Health Service aims to increase the number of specialists qualified to provide thrombectomy in England. We are working with the General Medical Council to extend accredited training in the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy for the treatment of acute ischaemic stroke.

■ **Tomography: Procurement**

Dan Carden:

[\[89898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 83748 on Health Services: Weather, what type of imaging equipment the £15 million allocated in 2022-23 will go to.

Dan Carden:

[\[89899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 83748 on Health Services: Weather, how old the 200 magnetic resonance imaging scanners are that are being upgraded; and what proportion this is of the total number of magnetic resonance imaging scanners which require upgrading in England.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The funding will be used to provide computed tomography, including single-photon emission computed tomography; fluoroscopy; interventional radiology; mammography; magnetic resonance imaging; and non-obstetric ultrasound scan x-ray. It will also include miscellaneous support items and accessories.

The majority of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanners being upgraded are under six years old. Funding criteria was approved to upgrade all appropriate MRI scanners in acute hospital trusts with acceleration technology to deliver the greatest

impact on waiting lists. Older MRI scanners were excluded as this equipment was close to the recommended replacement age of over 10 years old and suppliers could not ensure the technology would deliver the expected growth in capacity. In future, suppliers and NHS Supply Chain will work with National Health Service trusts to ensure that where appropriate MRI acceleration is purchased, this is in conjunction with the scanner purchase.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**

Esther McVey:

[\[88867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to amend the Seasonal Workers visa scheme to help increase the potential supply of labour in the agricultural sector.

Robert Jenrick:

The Seasonal Worker route was extended into this year, with 38,000 visas available, to support our farmers growing fruit and vegetables as they adapt to changes in the UK labour market. The Government is keeping the position under close review and I hope to say more on this matter in due course.

■ **Animal Experiments**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[88831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of experiments carried out on animals each year; and if she will make it her policy to phase out the use of cats in scientific procedures.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), cats (together with dogs, horses, and non-human primates) are specially protected species. This means that greater oversight is required of establishments holding these species and of projects using these species.

Government policy is to actively support and fund the development and dissemination of techniques that Replace, Reduce and Refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved through funding UK Research and Investment who fund the National Centre for the 3Rs and fund further research through Innovate UK, the Medical Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council into the development of alternatives.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[88840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Animals in Science Regulation Unit annual reports 2019 to 2021, published on 26 October, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the incidence of non-compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in laboratories.

Tom Tugendhat:

Establishments conducting research are regularly inspected, with both announced and unannounced inspections carried out by inspectors to ensure compliance with their licences and the legislation.

The regulator's compliance policy explains how it identifies and investigates potential incidents of non-compliance and decides on appropriate and proportionate measures aimed to minimise the risk of recurrence. It is available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-testing-and-research-compliance-with-aspa.

■ **Asylum: Hotels**

Stephen Kinnock: [79307]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of the hotels that were being used for asylum seeker accommodation on 1 September 2022 were no longer being used to house asylum seekers on (a) 1 October 2022 and (b) 1 November 2022.

Stephen Kinnock: [79308]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of the hotels being used for asylum seeker accommodation on 1 October 2022 were no longer being used to house asylum seekers on 1 November 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 9 November 2022]: On 1 September 2022 there were 264 hotels being used for asylum seeker accommodation, out of which all were in use on 3 October 2022 (earliest data set available for October 2022) and 1 was no longer in use on 1 st November 2022.

On 3 October there were 291 hotels being used for asylum seeker accommodation, out of which 2 were no longer in use on 1 November 2022.

Stuart C McDonald: [80737]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement of 31 October 2022, Official Report, column 641, on what dates she officially sanctioned each hotels' use for housing people processed at Manston asylum processing centre.

Stuart C McDonald: [80738]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement of 31 October 2022, Official Report, column 642, on which dates use of each of the hotels was sanctioned; whether and to what extent they were sanctioned for use to house people transferred from Manston asylum processing centre; and how many persons have now been transferred from Manston to those hotels.

Robert Jenrick:

Asylum accommodation is sourced and provided to those who are eligible and is not limited to those individuals who are processed at Manston following arrival by small boat. We continue to work at pace to secure suitable alternative accommodation.

Since 6th September over 100 new hotels providing over 9,000 additional bed spaces have been brought into use.

Jim Shannon:**[88870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from (a) Afghanistan, (b) Eritrea, (c) Iran, (d) Sudan and (e) Syria are accommodated in hotels under Part 5 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Robert Jenrick:

[The United Kingdom](#) has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and other support whilst their application for asylum is being considered as set out under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The Home Office publishes quarterly data on the number of asylum seekers and their dependents who are supported including a breakdown by support type, nationality and location of accommodation in table Asy_D11 of the Immigration Quarterly statistics asylum and resettlement datasets. The latest published data tables can be found at: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates the number of asylum seekers accommodated by specific accommodation setting. These figures are not available in a reportable format and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Daisy Cooper:**[92348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether residents in spot booking hotels are entitled to seek advice and treatment from general practitioners.

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.

Asylum seekers have access to health and social care services from the point of arrival in the UK and the Home Office and its contractors work closely with the NHS, Local Authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations to ensure that people can access the healthcare and support they need.

The asylum seekers accommodated in hotels by the Home Office have access to Migrant Help, a voluntary sector organisation funded by the Home Office, and they can use the NHS free of charge.

■ Asylum: Kurds**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[89886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims were made in the UK by Kurds in each year since 2010.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on asylum applications by nationality can be found in table Asy_D01 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. 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 asylum applications by ethnicity, as ethnicity is not routinely collected as part of an asylum application in a way that is reportable.

■ Asylum: Legal Aid Scheme**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[90865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has she made of the adequacy of the (a) availability and (b) accessibility of legal advice for asylum seekers currently living in Home Office accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: Asylum seekers housed in Home Office accommodation are signposted to obtain legal representation by Migrant Help. As part of their induction process, Migrant Help will provide asylum seekers with details of three legal representatives practising in the area they are accommodated in.

■ Asylum: Northern Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[92123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 November to Question 86410 on Asylum: Northern Ireland, what the cost to the public purse was of the 22 hotels that have been in use over the past six months.

Robert Jenrick:

There are currently more than 37,000 asylum seekers in hotels costing the UK taxpayer £5.6 million a day. Occupancy levels vary and the number of people flowing through contingency hotel accommodation in any one month is not recorded.

Accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not publish this information. However, total expenditure on asylum is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>

■ Asylum: Oxfordshire

Layla Moran:

[\[92328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers and refugees pending asylum status there are in Oxfordshire; and how many of them (a) are in temporary accommodation, (b) are staying in hotels and (c) were released from Manston processing centre to Oxfordshire.

Robert Jenrick:

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.

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). 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.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[92239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2022 to Question 60212 on Asylum: Rwanda, from which Departmental budget was the £20 million upfront payment to the Government of Rwanda made.

Robert Jenrick:

This payment has been made from the Home Office.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Kate Osamor:

[\[88967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether asylum accommodation providers are required to record the number of residents who are physically harmed within their properties.

Kate Osamor:

[\[88968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether asylum accommodation providers are required to inform her Department of the number of residents who are physically harmed at their properties.

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). The contracts stipulate that all incidents must be reported to the Home Office immediately by the accommodation providers.

We have also worked closely with providers and stakeholders to develop a safeguarding assurance framework which is available at [Asylum support contracts safeguarding framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114122/Asylum_Support_Contracts_Safeguarding_Framework.pdf).

The Asylum Support Contracts Safeguarding Framework is a supplementary document to others that are publicly available. The framework is designed to provide a high-level overview of the responsibilities of all parties and is to be read in conjunction with the safeguarding elements of the Accommodation and Support Contracts (AASC) - Schedule 2 - and the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) - [AIRE Contract](#). These contracts were designed with safeguarding of the individual at their heart.

Stephen Kinnock:

[92241]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much and what proportion of the official development assistance budget has been spent on (a) Manston immigration centre and (b) temporary accommodation for asylum seekers in the 2022-23 financial year.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office has not used any Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds on Manston immigration centre.

Provisional and final UK ODA spend data for 2022 will be published as normal in the Spring and Autumn of 2023 respectively. The latest data available is the final data for 2021 UK ODA spend, which was published November 23rd.

■ Domestic Abuse: Cost of Living

Apsana Begum:

[92375]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help survivors of domestic abuse and coercive control with the cost of living crisis.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We are aware increases in the cost of living may generate additional challenges for domestic abuse victims and survivors.

In many cases those who have experienced domestic abuse may have had to face economic abuse. This is where perpetrators control a victim's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or their ability to obtain goods or services, which can make it more challenging for victims and survivors to leave an abuser.

Our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan doubles investment to £200,000 to further improve the response to economic abuse and provide vital support and economic safety for victims.

More broadly, the Plan commits over £140 million to support victims of domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also extends the controlling or coercive behaviour offence to cover post-separation abuse. This ensures that those who continue to perpetrate abuse after the survivors stops living with them can be brought to justice.

In addition, the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan commits to establish trials of a 'flexible fund', which charities could use to provide extra money to victims and survivors.

■ Julian Assange

Kenny MacAskill: [\[89029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) she or (b) officials in her Department have met with US officials to discuss Julian Assange.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Home Office routinely cooperates with international partners, including the US, on a range of issues involving judicial cooperation. This specific case is subject to ongoing court proceedings, so we are unable to comment further.

Further information on the UK's extradition processes can be found on www.gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/extradition-processes-and-review>

■ Members: Correspondence

Dan Carden: [\[87962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2022 to Question 76099 on Members: Correspondence, how many cases were affected by technical issues; and what the average delay caused to these cases was.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: We do not hold the data requested. We cannot separate out MI for this cohort through normal reporting mechanisms. The most recent transparency data on overall performance against the six month service standard for citizenship applications was published on 25 August and can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1100322/UKVI_VC_Transparency_Q2_2022_Published.ods

■ Passports: Dual Nationality

Drew Hendry: [\[90831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of changing the wording of requests for previous passports during passport applications process to indicate clearly that the request is for all passports including those not from the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: Passport application guidance outlines the requirement for customers to send in all their latest passports. In the case of a dual national, this includes a passport issued by another country.

While His Majesty's Passport Office considers this guidance to be clear, it will continue to keep this under review to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its customers.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Sarah Olney: [\[77530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much money her Department spends on accommodating Afghan refugees in the UK hotels per day.

Robert Jenrick:

The cost of accommodating those resettling under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or relocating under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, whilst they await permanent accommodation, is estimated at £1 million a day.

The Home Office works to secure contracts which offer the best value for money, whilst providing an appropriate level of support to those under its care.

We do not want to see Afghan families in temporary accommodation for any longer than is absolutely necessary. We are therefore working with local authorities across the UK to identify more opportunities for those being housed in bridging hotels to move into permanent accommodation.

■ Refugees: Families

Jim Shannon: [\[88871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for Refugee Family Reunion are awaiting decision.

Jim Shannon: [\[88872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the average time it takes to decide Refugee Family Reunion applications.

Jim Shannon: [\[88873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the processing time for applications for Refugee Family Reunion on refugees and their families.

Robert Jenrick:

The average time it takes to decide or the impact of processing this information is not routinely published and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs. The Home Office are unable to report how many applications for Refugee Family Reunion are awaiting a decision.

We are currently working outside the 60 day service standard for refugee family reunion visa applications and processing times are approximately double the expected service standard timeframe. We are working hard to recover our decision-making timescales and are looking to streamline our processes and secure additional

resource to support this work. We will prioritise applications where there is a particularly urgent or compelling reason to do so.

■ **UK Border Force: Patrol Craft**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[92145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November to Question 87798, whether her definition of a future-proofed replacement capability for the Border Force's existing fleet remains the procurement of (i) five new Cutters and (ii) six new Coastal Patrol Vessels; and when her Department plans to launch that procurement process.

Robert Jenrick:

The requirements for Border Force Maritime's replacement fleet are being developed to ensure the flexibility and adaptability necessary for the vessels to remain effective throughout their anticipated lives. This includes assessing possible changes to the operating environment and technology, alongside ensuring greener propulsion capabilities and the crew accommodation that best supports operations. Further analysis has been commissioned to confirm the best mix and specification of Cutters and Coastal Patrol Vessels that delivers the overall capabilities required.

The key next stage in the procurement process is to initiate engagement with the supplier market including an industry day. This will further inform the subsequent procurement action timeline.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Darren Henry:

[\[89046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with representatives of the French Government on reducing the number of small boats crossing the Channel.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK continues to maintain close contact with the Government of France on our joint cooperation to tackle illegal migration.

Most recently, on 14 November the Home Secretary met her counterpart Minister Darmanin to agree to a new multi-year strategic and operational plan with Minister Darmanin, supported by investment of up to €72.2 million euros (approximately £62.2 million) this financial year.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[89750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the potential number of small boats Channel crossings each year if the proposed asylum deal with France is implemented.

Robert Jenrick:

The department does not publish modelling of small boat arrivals. The new agreement is being implemented and builds on the work to date with the French

which has seen 30,000 crossings prevented this year, nearly twice the number compared to this time last year, and marks a next step towards even deeper cooperation on tackling these crossings.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[92124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much will have been paid to the French authorities for assistance in dealing with illegal immigration using small boats between 1 January 2015 and the end of this financial year.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK and France maintain a longstanding relationship on tackling illegal migration at the shared border and the UK has committed several funding packages to supporting this work in recent years.

Previous funding packages include:

- In 2015, the UK and France signed a Joint Declaration which committed £45.96 million towards security enhancements of the juxtaposed controls and to moving migrants into reception centres across France.
- This was followed by payments in 2016 of £17 million and a further £36 million to strengthen the border and maintain the operation of the juxtaposed controls.
- In 2018 the UK made a commitment of €50 million (£45.5m) to implement the terms of the Treaty.
- This was followed in 2019 by the signature of the Joint Action Plan on Combatting Illegal Migration Involving Small Boats. The UK committed €3.6 million (approximately £3.25m) to tackling the issue. This was supplemented with a further €2.5 million (£2.25m) dedicated to the deployment of gendarme reservists and further strengthening preventive security measures at the French coast.
- In 2020 the UK pledged €31.4 million (roughly £28.1 million) to support joint efforts to tackle the rise in small boat crossings.
- A further bilateral funding arrangement was reached between the UK and France on 20 July 2021 supported by UK investment of €62.7 million (approximately £54m).
- Most recently, on 14 November the Home Secretary agreed to a new multi-year strategic and operational plan with Minister Darmanin, supported by investment of up to €72.2 million euros (approximately £62.2 million) this financial year.

■ Visas

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[92240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her planned timetable is for the publication of her Department's report on tier one investor visas; and for what reason the report has not yet been published.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government is considering its response on the findings of its review of the Tier 1 Investor visa programmes operation between 30 June 2008 and November 2015, which will be provided as soon as practicably possible, taking into account the need to safeguard our national security and the ongoing work of our law enforcement agencies.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE■ **Crops: Morocco****Sir James Duddridge:**[\[88852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will make an assessment of any potential disruption to the UK Morocco Association Agreement and the risk to securing access to affordable fruits and vegetable sold in the UK market.

Greg Hands:

The UK Morocco Association Agreement has been in operation since 1 January 2021 and we are now working effectively with Morocco to assess how we can maximise trade under the agreement. At the trade sub-committee earlier this year, we discussed a range of priority sectors, including fruits and vegetables which constitute around 35% of all goods imported from Morocco to the UK.

There is an ongoing Judicial Review pertaining to the application of the Association Agreement to the Western Sahara. We are unable to comment as this is a matter of sub-judice whilst the matter is in UK courts.

■ **Trade Agreements: India****Gareth Thomas:**[\[89688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled UK-India free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach, published in January 2022, if she will publish the modelling her Department used as the basis for Table 2: Summary of estimates of UK macroeconomic impacts, long run changes against the baseline; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

A UK-India Free Trade Agreement will offer significant economic opportunities to British business and will benefit domestic consumers.

The macroeconomic impacts of a deal are estimated using a Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model. Details of the approach used to assess the macroeconomic impacts and the modelling assumptions are described on page 53 and 54 of the document. These provide the basis for the results seen in Table 2.

Further details on the model specification can be found in 'Technical annexes accompanying the Scoping Assessment of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and India' (

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-approach-to-negotiating-a-free-trade-agreement-with-india>).

■ Trade Promotion

Ruth Jones: [92336]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the Government's policy is on where Prime Minister's Trade Envoys should stay when visiting their country of service.

Andrew Bowie:

The preferred option for Trade Envoys is to stay at the Residence of the Ambassador or High Commissioner when visiting their respective markets although for a range of operational reasons this is not always possible.

■ Wrightbus: Finance

Owen Thompson: [76010]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department undertook an assessment of potential conflicts of interest before awarding Wrightbus £26 million in UK Export Finance-backed funding.

Andrew Bowie:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) does not invest equity or provide funding into projects. The support it provides is in the form of insurance or guarantees for loans from commercial lenders.

UKEF considers all applications for support on their respective merits based on objective criteria. Any support given is provided on commercial terms, generating a return for the UK taxpayer.

UKEF applies rigorous due diligence processes before providing support for any transaction.

As is usual with such applications, there was no ministerial involvement in UKEF's decision to support this transaction, which is driving growth and creating high-skilled green jobs in Northern Ireland.

JUSTICE

■ Ministry of Justice: Redundancy

Emily Thornberry: [88843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 77345, 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.

Damian Hinds:

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. The contracts of six Special Advisers in Ministry of Justice were terminated in the period in question. Severance pay must be paid back if a Special Adviser returns to government.

■ Ministry of Justice: Staff

Angela Rayner: [92235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff worked for his Department in September 2021.

Angela Rayner: [92237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff worked for his Department in September 2022.

Damian Hinds:

The Ministry of Justice's monthly workforce data is published here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/workforce-management-information-moj

We have interpreted the question to mean civil service workforce.

On 30th September 2021 there were 87,233 payroll staff in post (headcount) in the Ministry of Justice and the executive agencies.

On 30th September 2022 there were 88,713 payroll staff in post (headcount) in the Ministry of Justice and the executive agencies.

■ Prison Operational Resourcing and Stability Panel

Ellie Reeves: [88989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, who sits on the Prison Operational Resourcing and Stability Panel.

Ellie Reeves: [88990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which prisons have received support from the Prison Operational Resourcing and Stability Panel to help with acute resourcing pressures in each of the last 24 months.

Ellie Reeves: [88991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support the Prison Operational Resourcing and Stability Panel has provided to prisons with the most acute resourcing pressures affecting their ability to deliver full regimes and affecting the stability of the prison.

Damian Hinds:

The Operational Stability and Resourcing Panel was introduced in 2015. It is chaired by the HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Deputy Director for Prisons with

the remit of monitoring prison stability, resource and regime delivery, making data-driven decisions to determine resource requirements in prisons, and approving and facilitating additional support to prisons where evidence suggests it is required.

Alongside the Chair, the panel consists of the HMPPS Tactical Resourcing Lead, Business Delivery Manager and representatives for HMPPS Executive Directors for North and South England, Long Term High Security Estate, Wales, and the Youth Custody Service, supported by Human Resources, Finance and Employee Relations.

Support offered to prisons will depend on the specific circumstances, however this could include additional staff being deployed to a particular prison, approval for additional funds for Payment Plus overtime payments to staff to cover shortfalls where there is an identified risk to regime stability, and redeployment of operational headquarters staff to a prison where necessary.

The following table lists the support the Panel has provided to prisons in the last 24 months, with start and end dates. Some prisons appear more than once with the same or similar dates where staff at more than one grade have been provided.

Attachments:

1. Annex A [2022-11-24 88989 88990 88991 v2.xlsx]

■ Prisons: Domestic Visits

Ellie Reeves:

[88988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which prisons he has visited in each of his tenures as Secretary of State for Justice.

Damian Hinds:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Justice, visited 11 Prisons and Secure Schools Construction Sites from September 2021. All venues are listed below:

- 28.07.2022 - Secure School construction site, Medway, Kent
- 30.05.2022 - HMP Exeter
- 12.05.2022 - HMP/YOI Feltham
- 25.04.2022 - HMP Woodhill
- 03.03.2022 - HMP Five Wells
- 02.03.2022 - HMP Wandsworth
- 10.02.2022 - HMP Prescoed
- 03.02.2022 - HMP Frankland
- 02.02.2022 - HMP Hatfield
- 07.12.2021 - HMP ISIS
- 13.10.2021 - HMP/YOI High Down

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ **Members: Lone Parents**

Sarah Olney:

[\[88982\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the (a) sitting hours and (b) voting procedures of the House of Commons enable the participation of Members who are single parents.

Penny Mordaunt:

I am always keen to listen to suggestions from colleagues about the steps we might take to make Parliament a more modern working environment.

Sitting hours are a matter for the whole House and any changes would require a change to Standing Orders. A series of changes were made in 2012 following work by the Procedure Committee, and members can raise these matters with the Committee.

Voting procedures are also a matter for the House and any changes should enjoy a wide consensus among members. Slipping and pairing has been, and continues to be, a valuable practice that allows members to be absent from votes and the Whips' offices on all sides of the House work hard to ensure that the system functions as well as possible for individual members. The House recently agreed an expansion of the proxy voting scheme and a review is to be completed by the Procedure Committee by 17th March 2023. Again, members may wish to approach the Committee with issues as part of this review.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **Affordable Housing and Social Rented Housing**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposals contained in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill on levels of (a) affordable and (b) social housing.

Lucy Frazer:

An impact assessment for the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will be published in due course.

■ **Buildings: Fire Prevention**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[88853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an estimate of public funding required to carry out cladding remediation of unsafe buildings.

Stephen Hammond:

[\[88854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure developers and product manufacturers responsible for defective buildings are required to take financial responsibility for those buildings.

Lee Rowley:

Under the Building Safety Act 2022, those responsible for creating historical safety defects will bear the burden of costs for remediation and will be held accountable. Building owners and landlords who are, or are connected to, the developer must fix historical safety defects in their buildings above 11 metres or five storeys.

The Act also gives developers, landlords and leaseholders new legal remedies against construction product manufacturers whose products fail to comply with regulations, which results in a construction product being installed in a building and the product causing or contributing to a dwelling being rendered 'unfit for habitation'.

The Act also gives the Secretary of State the power to establish a statutory scheme to distinguish between industry actors that have committed to take responsibility where historic defects are identified, and remediation is needed and those that fail to do so. In addition, the Act gives the Secretary of State powers to prevent those that have failed to take responsibility from carrying out development for which planning permission has been granted, and to prevent them from receiving building control approval on their developments.

As the final backstop of the leaseholder protections, section 133 of the Act (once in force) will create a duty that landlords take reasonable steps to explore alternative cost recovery avenues before asking leaseholders to contribute to remediation works - including pursuing third parties responsible for defective buildings.

To protect residents in high-rise residential buildings who are facing the most serious safety risks, £5.1 billion has been committed by Government to fund cladding remediation where developers, industry or building owners are not doing so. The Building Safety Levy will be charged on new residential developments and raise an additional estimated £3 billion to remediate buildings over 11 metres tall, where no responsible developer has been identified.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Consultants**

Angela Rayner:

[\[92226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department spent in total on external recruitment consultants in 2021; how many full time equivalent posts were filled as a result of that expenditure; and how many of those posts were filled by individuals recruited from outside the civil service.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer to Question UIN [59771](#) on 25 October 2022. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) posts filled as a result of that

expenditure was 1.4, of which 0.4 FTE was filled by individuals recruited from outside the Civil Service.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Written Questions

Emily Thornberry: [\[92146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to answer Question 73809 tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 28 October 2022.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the my answer to Question UIN [73809](#), on the 21 November 2022.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Helen Morgan: [\[92395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the state of readiness of local councils for administering mandatory voter ID in May 2023 local elections.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [90820](#), on the 23 November 2022.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Dan Jarvis: [\[92214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to publish minutes of all deliberative meetings on the selection of successful bids in the second round of the Levelling Up Fund.

Dan Jarvis: [\[92215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to provide additional resource to local authorities on request in order to deliver levelling up funding bids.

Dehenna Davison:

As for round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund, we will publish an explanatory note on GOV.UK which will provide details on the approach to assessment and decision making. This will sit alongside information on the balance of successful and unsuccessful bids by theme and geography.

It is important that councils have the capacity to deliver projects through levelling up funding. To this end, my department has already provided £125,000 in capacity funding to all English local authorities in category 1 places, those identified as being most in need of this type of funding, as well as all local authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to support Levelling Up Fund bids.

We continue to work closely with successful places and are considering what further support may be helpful to support delivery.

■ **Levelling Up Fund: Directors**

Dan Jarvis: [\[92216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many of the Levelling Up Director posts have been filled.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to my answer to Question UIN [63318](#) on 19th October 2022, any announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ **Local Government Association: Local Government Finance**

Catherine West: [R] [\[88980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Local Government Association on local authority budgets.

Lee Rowley:

Ministers and officials from the Department regularly meet with the Local Government Association and other sector representatives to discuss local authority budgets. Details of external ministerial meetings are published on GOV.UK.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Evictions**

Rachael Maskell: [\[92259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to end Section 21 notices.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [84925](#), on 17 November 2022.

■ **Railways: Regional Planning and Development**

Dan Jarvis: [\[92213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has held discussions with the (a) Secretary of State for Transport and (b) Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of only delivering (i) core Northern Powerhouse Rail (ii) High Speed 2 to Manchester on his levelling up agenda.

Dehenna Davison:

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

TRANSPORT**■ Avanti West Coast and TransPennine Express: Timetables****Louise Haigh:**[\[92279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of whether the (a) TransPennine Express and (b) Avanti West Coast December 2022 timetable change is achievable.

Huw Merriman:

TransPennine Express (TPE) is providing regular progress updates which the Department, through the Rail North Partnership with Transport for the North, is monitoring closely. Avanti West Coast is also providing regular progress updates which the Department is monitoring closely.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and Network Rail's Programme Management Office have also reviewed TPE's and Avanti's plans and are content that they are deliverable. However, the Department, ORR and Network Rail all recognise that not all factors are within TPE's and Avanti's control and these improvements will require the engagement of the trade unions.

■ Aviation: Compensation**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[89885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the former Secretary of State for Transport's oral evidence to Transport Select Committee on 19 October 2022, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the proposal for flight disruption compensation set out in the consultation entitled Reforming aviation consumer policy: protecting air passenger rights, published on 31 January 2022.

Jesse Norman:

We are conducting a comprehensive review and analysis of all the responses received and will set out next steps shortly.

■ Electric Vehicles: Excise Duties**Gill Furniss:**[\[92303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential impact of the decision to apply Vehicle Excise Duty on electric vehicles from 2025 on the uptake of electric vehicles before the Autumn Statement 2022.

Jesse Norman:

HMT is responsible for setting tax rates, including vehicle excise duty and company car tax rates, and they carry out assessments relating to fiscal measures they take.

The Government will continue to support the uptake of zero emission vehicles to meet our 2030 phase out date for petrol and diesel cars and vans through preferential

tax measures and accelerating the rollout of charging infrastructure for those without off-street parking as well as rapid charging on motorways.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Grants**

Gill Furniss: [\[92304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the end of the plug-in car grant in June 2022 on the consumer uptake of electric vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

Since June 2022, the UK's zero emission vehicle market has continued to grow. According to industry statistics, so far in 2022 there has been a 38.4% increase in the sale of battery electric vehicles compared to the same time period in 2021 and over one million plug-in vehicles have now been registered in the UK.

■ **Govia Thameslink Railway**

Helen Hayes: [\[89880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate has she made of the savings to the public purse caused by reduction in GTR services in London coach numbers and frequency made in 2022.

Huw Merriman:

The changes that Govia Thameslink Railway implemented in 2022 increased the number of services that ran. Therefore there were no associated cost savings.

■ **Passengers: Mental Illness**

Rachael Maskell: [\[88936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help reduce fatalities on the railways associated with mental health episodes.

Rachael Maskell: [\[88937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure there is greater support for those suffering a mental health episode at a station or other Network Rail premises.

Rachael Maskell: [\[88938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support he is providing to rail staff who are dealing with members of the public experiencing mental health episodes.

Huw Merriman:

The Government believes that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in the rail industry and everyone has a part they can play. The Department actively works with the rail industry and wider stakeholders to prevent suicide, safeguard the vulnerable and deliver a safer transport network. Through their contracts train operators are required to develop suicide prevention plans and safeguarding

strategies based on the principles of preventing and reducing the likelihood of harm to people, promoting the values of safeguarding to staff by raising awareness of safeguarding priorities and mitigating the impact of harm by reporting safeguarding concerns to statutory or other bodies, who can facilitate access to pathways that provide help and support.

■ Railways: North of England

Imran Hussain:

[\[89844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, whether the commitment to core Northern Powerhouse Rail will include a high-speed rail stop in Bradford.

Huw Merriman:

As confirmed by the Autumn Statement, the Government is committed to delivering the Northern Powerhouse Rail core network set out in the Integrated Rail Plan. We are looking at opportunities and plans for Bradford station and how to connect Bradford up better.

Louise Haigh:

[\[92277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will reassess the Northern Powerhouse Rail options considered in the Integrated Rail Plan using the updated PLANET Framework Model v10.1 and NoRMS 2 model.

Huw Merriman:

Following the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan, the Department for Transport will continue to develop the business case for Northern Powerhouse Rail to support future decision making, including further development of the economic analysis.

The Department draws on a range of transport models to inform its economic analysis including the Planet Framework model and NoRMS. Models are regularly updated to reflect changes to appraisal assumptions and model development work.

■ Railways: Passengers

Rachael Maskell:

[\[88935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the trends in the level of rail patronage have been in the latest period for which data is available; and whether his Department has taken recent steps to increase modal shift onto rail.

Huw Merriman:

Statistics on the number of rail passenger journeys are published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). This data is published on a quarterly basis. Table 1 below presents the number of passenger journeys undertaken in each quarter.

TABLE 1: THE NUMBER OF PASSENGER JOURNEYS, GREAT BRITAIN

Quarter	Number of Passenger Journeys (million)
April to June 2021	182.0
July to September 2021	247.9
October to December 2021	285.0
January to March 2022	275.1
April to June 2022	331.8

Source: ORR Table 1221 - Passenger Journeys by Sector, Great Britain

The Department is continuing to work closely with industry to support demand and revenue recovery. For example, the industry has undertaken national marketing targeted at lapsed and potential customers to remind them of the benefits and good value of rail travel.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Mrs Sheryll Murray:

[\[902400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of roads in England.

Mr Richard Holden:

During this Parliament the Government is investing over £5 billion in highways maintenance. It is up to the respective highway authority how best to spend this funding to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. The Department encourages good practice in highway maintenance through channels such as the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice produced by the UK Roads Leadership Group (UKRLG).

■ Trains: Diesel

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[902399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when diesel trains will be phased out on the national rail network.

Huw Merriman:

Our aim is to remove all diesel-only trains (passenger and freight) from the network by 2040.

■ TransPennine Express: Timetables

Louise Haigh:

[\[92278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many timetable alterations to TransPennine Express services will be introduced in December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

In the TransPennine Express' December 2022 timetable, on the North TransPennine route:

- Hull to Manchester Piccadilly hourly services are planned to be extended to Liverpool Lime Street;
- Manchester Airport to Redcar Central hourly services are planned to be extended to Saltburn (subject to track access being obtained);
- Newcastle to Liverpool Lime Street hourly services are planned to revert to a through express service;
- Scarborough to York hourly services are planned to be extended to Manchester Piccadilly every two hours and will include calls between Stalybridge and Huddersfield in peak hours; and
- a second service between Newcastle and York and onwards to Manchester Piccadilly is planned to be introduced, which will operate every two hours and will include calls between Stalybridge and Huddersfield in peak hours.

The aforementioned services will see East/West frequency between Manchester and Leeds restored nearer to pre-COVID-19 levels.

On the South TransPennine route, Cleethorpes to Manchester Piccadilly services are planned to be extended to Liverpool Lime Street via Warrington. Due to essential works by Network Rail to a platform at Irlam, trains will call there in the Manchester-bound direction from the December 2022 timetable start date and in the Liverpool direction from 27 December 2022 (assuming completion of those works).

On the Anglo-Scottish route, at the December 2022 timetable change, services are planned to be increased from 31 to 35 trains per weekday as follows:

- eight return journeys per day between Edinburgh and Manchester/Manchester Airport;
- four return journeys per day between Glasgow and Manchester/Manchester Airport;
- one journey between Glasgow and Liverpool Lime Street and two journeys between Liverpool Lime Street and Glasgow; and
- five part route journeys southbound and three part route journeys northbound.

■ Transport: Bills**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[88983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the former Secretary of State for Transport's oral evidence to Transport Select Committee on 19 October 2022, whether it remains his Department's intention to publish a Transport bill before May 2023.

Jesse Norman:

We will bring forward legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

TREASURY**■ Aggregates Levy: Wales****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[92299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Welsh Government on devolving the Aggregates Levy to Wales.

James Cartlidge:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. This includes regular engagement with the Welsh Government on a range of issues.

Treasury officials are always happy to engage with the Welsh Government, should they wish to discuss this or any other issue further.

■ Competition and Markets Authority: Finance**Lucy Powell:**[\[93552\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the annual budget is of the Digital Markets Unit within the Competition and Markets Authority in each year since that unit was established; and what the planned budget is for the Digital Markets Unit in each financial year until 2024-5.

John Glen:

The Digital Markets Unit (DMU) was established in April 2021 as part of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The DMU is funded through the CMA's regular budget setting process. In the Spending Review 2020, set up costs for the DMU were included in the CMA's 2021-22 resource budget of £109.6m.

At Spending Review 2021, the CMA's resource budget, which includes the DMU, was set at £112.5 million in 2022-23, £127.9m in 2023-24 and £130.5m in 2024-25.

■ Electric Vehicles: Infrastructure

Dan Carden:

[\[90877\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether revenue raised through Vehicle Excise Duty will be used to fund additional infrastructure for electric vehicles.

James Cartlidge:

The Government has no plans to hypothecate revenue from VED. VED ensures motorists contribute towards general taxation. The existing arrangement of funding for charging infrastructure - through general taxation and borrowing - allows funding priorities to be more closely aligned with need, rather than depending on where revenue is raised.

Since 2020, the government has committed £2.5 billion to support the transition to electric vehicles, with £1.6 billion of this to accelerate the rollout of chargepoint infrastructure. Further, the government will be providing industry with certainty on the scale of its ambition through the introduction of a Zero Emission Vehicle Mandate from 2024 onwards. The government will also continue to incentivise lower emissions vehicles through the continuation of favourable Company Car Tax rates for electric vehicles, and capital allowances for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

■ Energy: Conservation

Alan Brown:

[\[92256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 5.6 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November, what the funding mechanism is for the additional £6bn funding for energy efficiency for the period 2025-2028.

James Cartlidge:

An additional £6 billion of funding for energy efficiency and clean heat announced at the Autumn Statement is classified as capital department expenditure limit (CDEL) for FY 2025/26, 26/27 and 27/28. This funding has not been allocated to particular schemes. The BEIS Secretary of State will announce further details about the Energy Efficiency Taskforce in due course.

■ Energy: Storage

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[92065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Autumn Statement 2022 on large-scale, long-duration energy storage in the UK.

James Cartlidge:

As set out in the British Energy Security Strategy, the government remains committed to encouraging all forms of flexibility with sufficient large-scale, long-duration electricity storage to balance the overall system.

As part of the Autumn Statement the government has published a technical note on the electricity generator levy. This sets out the government's view of how the tax will

operate, including the intention not to apply the levy to pumped storage hydroelectricity or battery storage.

■ Energy: Tax Allowances

Alan Brown:

[\[89858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the investment allowance rate is for (a) oil and gas exploration companies and (b) renewable energy generators.

James Cartlidge:

The UK government places additional taxes on the extraction of oil and gas, with companies engaged in the production of oil and gas in the UK and on the UK Continental Shelf subject to a combined headline tax rate on their profits of 40%. The Energy Profits Levy was introduced in May as a temporary 25% tax on top of this (the rate will rise to 35% from 1 January 2023). The Energy Profits Levy will end on 31 March 2028.

All companies within the UK tax charge acquiring plant and machinery for oil and gas exploration can claim a full deduction for the cost of their investments against taxable profits. In addition, specific investment reliefs are available when computing taxable profits, including an investment allowance within the Energy Profits Levy, which means for every £1 businesses invest they will overall get a 91p tax saving.

Renewable energy generators pay corporation tax at a significantly lower rate of 19% (this will rise to 25% from 1 April 2023). Such companies can also claim capital allowances, including the Annual Investment Allowance and super-deduction, in order to reduce their taxable profits subject to Corporation Tax.

While renewable electricity generators will be subject to the new, temporary Electricity Generator Levy – an additional 45% levy from 1 Jan 2023 – whereas the Energy Profits Levy will apply to profits without a direct link to market prices, the Electricity Generator Levy will be focused on extraordinary returns from selling output at prices which could be regarded as ‘exceptional’ compared to historic levels. This means that the levy would not apply where prices return to historic norms. Regarding investment, the Electricity Generator Levy should not detract from the wider measures the government is taking to support investment in this space, including committing £30 billion to support the domestic green industrial revolution from March 2021 to the end of 2027-28. Going forward, renewable electricity will be increasingly generated under the Contracts for Difference (CfD) regime and the Electricity Generator Levy would not apply to deployment covered by CfD.

■ Energy: Taxation

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[92053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department produced a forecast of any changes in tax revenue resulting from the Investment Allowances on the Energy Profit Levy before 17 November 2022.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[92054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department have made an assessment of the potential revenue impacts of equalising the Investment Allowances for the Energy Profit Levy and the Energy Generator Levy.

Victoria Atkins:

The Energy Profits Levy (EPL) was introduced in May in response to sharp increases in oil and gas prices over the past year. At the Autumn Statement 2022, the Chancellor announced that the rate of the levy would rise by ten percentage points to 35 per cent, effective from 1 January 2023. The levy has also been extended until 31 March 2028.

The Electricity Generator Levy (EGL) will be introduced from 1 January 2023 as a new, temporary 45 per cent tax levied on extraordinary returns being realised from certain electricity generators in the UK. The EGL is charged on a different base to the EPL. The EPL is applied to total profits, whereas the EGL will only apply on the excess portion of returns above the £75/MWh benchmark price – well above historic levels.

Renewable generators will be able to deduct their investment costs from their taxable profits for the purposes of Corporation Tax.

New renewable generation will continue to be eligible for the government's generous Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme. Since 2014, the CfD scheme has enabled around 26GW of new low-carbon capacity, with generators receiving almost £6 billion net in price support to date. Electricity generators will also continue to be able to claim relief for their investments from the Corporation Tax they pay.

The Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) forecast at Autumn Statement 2022 estimates revenues from EPL are expected to be £41.6 billion between 2022-23 and 2027-28. This is inclusive of the impact of the investment allowance, consistent with previous revenue projections for the levy. The OBR expect the Electricity Generator Levy to raise £14.22 billion over the same period.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[92055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he made an estimate of the predicted tax revenue from extending the Energy Generator levy to cover combined-cycle gas turbine generators before 17 November 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

From January 2023, a 45 per cent tax will be levied on extraordinary returns being realised from non-gas electricity generators in the UK. The measure will raise around £14.2 billion over the scorecard and help fund support for households and businesses with their energy bills as well as vital public services.

While gas generators are experiencing increased revenue from the substantial increase in the market prices of electricity, they are also impacted by the substantial increase in the price of gas. The inclusion of gas generators could have unintended impacts on electricity pricing with implications for the market as a whole or on certain

business models. The approach we have taken is consistent with gas generation being excluded from similar tax and regulatory interventions overseas.

■ Exports

Gareth Thomas: [\[92073\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much and what proportion of goods exports were made by businesses with a headcount of (a) 250 or more, (b) between 50 and 249, (c) between 10 and 49 and (d) less than 10 employees in each of the last 10 years.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly, as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), which is available via their dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com). From this website, it is possible to [build your own data tables](#) based upon bespoke search criteria, and download bulk datasets.

Data on UK exports by business characteristics, including number of employees, from 2013 to 2020 is available from the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-trade-in-goods-statistics-by-business-characteristics>

This information is not available prior to 2013. The information for 2021 will be published in December 2022.

■ Farms: Tenants

Tim Farron: [\[90779\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to meet with meet with Baroness Kate Rock to discuss the recommendations on taxation made in her Tenancy Working Group Report.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is considering the recommendations on taxation made in the Rock Review. The Government will publish a formal response to the review in due course.

■ Local Government Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[90841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he did not provide greater financial support for local authorities than that outlined in the Autumn Statement 2022.

John Glen:

Whilst taking difficult decisions at the Autumn Statement to ensure broader economic stability, we have increased funding for local authorities. At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government provided local authorities with access to up to an additional £2.8 billion for adult social care, discharge, and other services in 2023-24, increasing to £4.8 billion in 2024-25. This includes £1 billion of new grant funding in 2023-24 and

£1.7 billion in 2024-25, further flexibility on council tax, and savings from delaying the rollout of adult social care charging reforms.

■ **Mortgages: Interest Rates**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[92248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of (a) providing support to and (b) bringing forward proposals to help cap mortgage interest rates for people who have been required to pay high standard variable rates since 2008.

Andrew Griffith:

The cohort of borrowers referred to in this question are so-called mortgage prisoners. The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) review into mortgage prisoners, published in November 2021, found that the population of mortgage prisoners is varied and complex. There is no single measure to address all of the circumstances this population of mortgage holders face.

The Government has worked with the FCA to implement changes to its mortgage lending rules, removing the regulatory barrier that prevented some customers, who otherwise may have been able to switch, from accessing new products. Any further work on this issue must consider the practicality of solutions and their effects on the wider mortgage market, including the resilience of firms and fairness to other borrowers.

A cap on the Standard Variable Rates (SVRs) charged by inactive firms would be an unprecedented market intervention and would undermine the principle of risk-based pricing that underlies the mortgage market. It would entail risks to the financial stability of firms, who would be unable to vary their rates in line with their funding costs, and would be unfair to borrowers in the wider mortgage market who pay similar rates to mortgage prisoners. It is also important to note that the SVRs charged by inactive firms are in line with those paid by borrowers in the active market.

Ultimately, the pricing of mortgages is a commercial decision for lenders. However, if mortgage borrowers do fall into financial difficulty, FCA guidance requires firms to provide support through tailored forbearance options. The Government has also taken a number of measures aimed at helping people to avoid repossession, including Support for Mortgage Interest loans for those in receipt of an income-related benefit, and protection in the courts through the Pre-Action Protocol, which makes clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders.

■ **P&O Ferries: Minimum Wage**

Angela Rayner:

[\[90818\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has taken steps to help ensure that P&O Ferries is complying with national minimum wage legislation on its vessels working between Cairnryan and Larne since 25 October 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC enforce the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the National Living Wage on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

HMRC do not comment on any identifiable individuals or businesses.

HMRC consider 100 per cent of complaints they receive and undertake an extensive programme to identify risk and allocate resource based on the level of risk identified, to ensure compliance with the NMW where there is entitlement. Alongside this they undertake an extensive programme of outreach activity to help employers understand their obligations and workers to know their rights.

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."

■ Pet Foods: VAT

David Linden: [\[90871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide an estimate of the annual cost to the public purse of a change in the rate of VAT on pet food from standard rate to zero defined in sections 6 and 7 of VAT Notice 701/15.

Victoria Atkins:

VAT has been designed as a broad-based tax on consumption, and the twenty per cent standard rate applies to the majority of goods and services. Pet food attracts the standard rate of VAT.

Introducing any new VAT reliefs would come at a cost to the Exchequer and any changes should be seen in the context of over £50 billion worth of requests for relief from VAT received since the EU referendum. Given this, there are no plans to change the current VAT treatment of pet food.

The Government keeps all taxes under review. Any future changes to the UK tax system will be costed in the usual way.

■ Private Education: VAT

Bridget Phillipson: [\[92176\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Autumn Statement of 17 November, Official Report, col 849, if he will publish the sources of the estimate that putting VAT on independent school fees would result in up to 90,000 children from the independent sector switching to state schools.

Victoria Atkins:

Many education and training services are exempt from VAT because there is a broad public interest in the provision of education. Vocational training provided by bodies

like further education colleges, training schemes ultimately funded by the Government, examination services, and closely related supplies like school meals and field trips are all exempt from VAT under these rules, and we have no plans to make changes.

Baines Cutler, an independent analyst, conducted detailed research into what would happen if VAT applied to private school fees. Their calculations suggest that 90,800 pupils would leave the independent sector over the next five years and that this drop-off would be 'virtually certain'.

■ Research and Development Expenditure Credit

Chi Onwurah:

[\[90811\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November to Question 74669, answered 3rd November on Research and Development Tax Credit, what resources HMRC allocates to (a) undertake compliance checks and (b) improve data-led risking processes; and whether those resources have increased in the last two financial years.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC has staff deployed on R&D from across the department. This includes dedicated specialist teams focusing on compliance with the SME and RDEC schemes as well as teams working with large businesses on the RDEC scheme. These teams work with HMRC's specialist Fraud, Risk & Intelligence colleagues as well as with customer service colleagues, lawyers and policy teams to support R&D claims and tackle error and fraud. This means that HMRC's overall resourcing is difficult to measure exactly as staff from these wider areas also cover other work as appropriate.

The specialist R&D team focused on SME/RDEC compliance has more than doubled in recent years in response to the growing levels of error and fraud. This team is part of HMRC's Incentives and Reliefs area of the business. As well as working on R&D, the Incentives and Reliefs teams also undertake compliance activity on other reliefs such as Creative Industries and Venture Capital. The total FTE for this wider team (excluding teams in Large Business, Fraud Investigation Service and Risk and Intelligence Service) is 245.

In HMRC's Large Business Directorate, the resource assigned to R&D compliance is currently 6 full time equivalent staff. They are ring-fenced for carrying out R&D compliance and additional resource is flexed to deal with further risks as identified.

■ Research: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[\[89815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paras 3.25 and 5.70 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the expressions of interest which will not now be taken forward.

John Glen:

The government set out last week its plans to refocus the Investment Zones programme, building high potential clusters for our growth industries. As a result, the original Expression of Interest (EOI) process run by DLUHC has not been taken forward. The EOI process has provided important insights into local area's growth needs and challenges, which will help DLUHC to design the refocussed programme. The government is grateful to local authorities for their work in developing Investment Zones proposals.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES■ **Females: Surveys**

Seema Malhotra: [\[92221\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has made an assessment of the findings of the 14th annual Girls' Attitudes Survey published by GirlGuiding in October 2022.

Seema Malhotra: [\[92222\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help support the (a) well-being and (b) safety of girls and young women (i) online and (ii) in communities.

Seema Malhotra: [\[92223\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to Girlguiding's Girls' Attitudes Survey 2022, what steps she with Cabinet colleagues to tackle sexism (a) online and (b) in the workplace.

Maria Caulfield:

The Girlguiding Girls' Attitudes Survey provides valuable data each year which helps the Government's policy development. We share the concerns about harassment and sexism highlighted in this survey and are taking action to protect women and girls, online, in communities and in the workplace.

Strong laws protecting people against workplace harassment and discrimination, including in relation to sex, are set out in the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the Government is supporting the protection from workplace harassment Bill introduced by the Hon. Member for Bath. This Bill will amend the Equality Act 2010 to strengthen legal protections for employees against workplace harassment, including sexual harassment and harassment by third-parties, such as customers and clients.

We will also bring the Online Safety Bill back to Parliament as soon as possible, which will introduce new protections for women and girls online. Under the Bill all services will need to proactively remove and prevent users from being exposed to priority illegal content. This includes content that particularly affects women and girls, such as illegal content relating to sexual images – for example, revenge and extreme pornography, harassment and cyberstalking. Women and girls will also be better able

to report abuse and should expect to receive an appropriate response from the platform.

In addition, we are putting a range of measures in place to support children and young people as part of the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. This includes providing £3 million to better understand what works to prevent violence against women and girls. We are investing in high quality, evidence-informed prevention projects, including in schools, to educate and inform children and young people about violence against women and girls, healthy relationships, consent and the consequences of abuse.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Scheme

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[92219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work application for each of the last 12 months.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[92220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work application as of 21 November 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work has had a significant increase in applications over the last year and have recruited new staff to meet the increased demand and reduce the time it takes to make decisions. Customers making new applications where they are starting work within the next 4 weeks, or have a grant coming to an end that requires renewal, are prioritised to ensure customers are able to enter and remain in the labour market. We are also transforming the Access to Work service through increased digitalisation, that will make the service more efficient, will make the application process easier, and improve the time taken from application through to decision.

MONTH	APPLICATIONS AWAITING A DECISION
Nov-21	14174
Dec-21	15282
Jan-22	17419
Feb-22	19352
Mar-22	21576
Apr-22	21419
May-22	23335

MONTH	APPLICATIONS AWAITING A DECISION
Jun-22	23805
Jul-22	23683
Aug-22	24410
Sep-22	25486
Oct-22	25289
21 st Nov-22	25281

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

■ Equality: Committee of Public Accounts

Ms Karen Buck: [\[88786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will place in the Library a copy of the equality analysis referred to in the letter of 6 September 2022 from the Permanent Secretary of his Department to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mims Davies:

This document contains information that could be used to defraud the benefit system and adversely impact the public purse, it is therefore not in the public interest to publish this. Our equality analyses are detailed live documents and change each time our models and projects change, which provides assurance that we are considering bias and balance at each stage of development of these initiatives.

■ Household Support Fund: Hornsey and Wood Green

Catherine West: [\[88975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Household Support Fund for supporting households in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.

Mims Davies:

Since October 2021, the London Borough of Haringey has been allocated over £7m through the Household Support Fund. As announced at Autumn Statement, the Household Support Fund will be extended until 31 March 2024. Haringey's share of this further funding will be announced in due course.

Local Authorities have the ties and local knowledge to best determine how support through the Household Support Fund should be provided to their communities, and they have the discretion to design their own local schemes, within the parameters of the grant determination and guidance for the fund.

The Household Support Fund forms part of the £37 billion of support government is providing with the cost of living during 2022/23 and the extension forms part of £26bn of support for 2023/24.

■ **Housing Benefit: Rhondda Cynon Taf**

Beth Winter:

[\[89060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the number of recipients of (a) Local Housing Allowance and (b) Discretionary Housing Payments in the (i) Taff Rhondda broad rental market area and (ii) Rhondda Cynon Taff local authority in the past year.

Mims Davies:

In August 2022 there were 5,320 households in receipt of Local Housing Allowance in Taff Rhondda Broad Rental Market Area and 7,550 in Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority.

Local Authorities in England and Wales receive funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) from the Department for Work and Pensions. Local Authorities administer the DHP scheme as they are best placed to make informed judgements about relative priorities and needs in their area. Monitoring information provided by the Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Authority states that there were 1,202 recipients who received DHPs in the full financial year 2021-22. The latest information provided by Rhondda Cynon Taff, which covers the first 6 months of the financial year 2022-23 (April to September 2022), states that there were 874 recipients who received DHPs.

Given the Department receives DHP spending and monitoring information at a Local Authority level, we do not hold the information required to answer how many recipients received a DHP in the Taff Rhondda Broad Rental Market Area.

■ **Local Housing Allowance: Private Rented Housing**

Beth Winter:

[\[89062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the requirement by private landlords of references, deposits or minimum income requirements on the numbers of rental properties available to recipients of Local Housing Allowance.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

The Government encourages private rented sector landlords and agents to assess the suitability of potential and existing tenants on an individual basis.

Landlords and letting agents are free to carry out any referencing checks within the law before accepting a new tenant in order to ensure a sustainable tenancy for both parties. This may include income checks or setting a requirement for a deposit.

The Government capped tenancy deposits through the Tenant Fees Act, which came into force in June 2019, and reduced the upfront costs associated with moving in the

private rented sector. The Act introduced a cap on tenancy deposits of five weeks' rent where the annual rent is less than £50,000 and a cap of six weeks' rent where it is over this threshold.

Local authorities may offer rent deposit, bond and guarantee schemes to help people on low incomes or at risk of homelessness. Discretionary Housing Payments can also support people experiencing financial difficulty, and who qualify for Housing Benefit or housing entitlement in Universal Credit, with housing costs. They can be used to address immediate financial difficulties such as a rent deposit.

■ Means-tested Benefits

Jon Trickett:

[\[90750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department's planned increase to state pension will affect means-tested benefits, including housing benefit.

Laura Trott:

The Government is committed to ensuring that older people are able to live with the dignity and respect they deserve. The State Pension is the foundation of support for older people. Subject to Parliamentary approval, State Pensions will increase by 10.1% from April 2023 in line with the Consumer Prices Index increase for the year to September 2022.

Housing Benefit is an income-related benefit which is intended to assist people who need help to pay their rent. Pension Credit is the other main income-related benefit received by pensioners. It is intended to help poorer pensioners with their day to day living costs. This year we are taking action to increase Pension Credit rates by 10.1%, in line with CPI, from April 2023. The personal allowances in Housing Benefit will also be increased by 10.1% from April.

■ Members: Telephone Services

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[92218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in the context of the cost of living crisis and potential rises in sickness and disability benefits caseloads, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating an MPs hotline.

Mims Davies:

While some hotlines were closed during COVID-19 measures, most have now been reinstated.

We offer a range of ways for MPs to contact DWP, including through dedicated MP hotlines within Disability Services, Child Maintenance Services, Retirement Services and more recently Working Age Benefits. Information about how MPs and their staff can best contact us is published on the Parliamentary website.

Enquiries received by MP hotlines are managed as part of DWP's correspondence teams. We closely monitor the performance of these teams and regularly review the resource allocated to this work and where process improvements can be made.

All MP hotlines are regularly checked during operating hours and calls from MPs are either answered directly or allow a voicemail message to be left, which will be picked up and responded to as soon as possible.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Sir Alan Campbell:

[88830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what is the average wait time for a decision to be made on awarding a Personal Independence Payment claim; and how many Personal Independence Payment claimants are waiting over six months for a decision.

Tom Pursglove:

In answer to (a), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) clearance times are available as part of the PIP Official Statistics quarterly release. The latest release, with data available to July 2022, is available here: [tables-pip-statistics-to-july-2022.ods \(live.com\)](#).

Table 1A in this release shows that median average clearance times for normal rules new claims are currently (July 2022) 18 weeks "end to end" (from registration to a decision being made).

In answer to (b), as of July 2022, the number of new PIP claims registered under normal rules who had been waiting over 6 months for a decision was 21,600.

Notes:

Source: PIP Atomic Data Store (ADS)

- Data regarding claims outstanding for more than 6 months is unpublished. It should be used with caution and may be subject to future revision.
- The status of claims as 'normal rules' and 'new claim' is shown as at the point of the claim registration. It is possible for claims to transition between normal and special rules, and between new claims and reassessments, during the course of the claimant journey.
- In analysis for the answer to (b), claimants waiting 'more than 6 months' is interpreted as claimants who registered prior to 31 st January 2022. This is because the dataset holds data up to 31 st July 2022.
- Data provided is for England and Wales.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[92126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has plans to means test Personal Independence Payments.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 November 2022 to Question UIN [80882](#).

■ **Restart Scheme****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[90816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much was (a) budgeted for and (b) spent on the Restart Scheme in the (i) 2021-22 and (ii) 2022-23 financial year.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: The work on Restart in 22-23 is ongoing and the 22/23 budget is £549.2m.

21/22 budget was £339.9m with actual costs being £343.8m

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females****Lisa Nandy:**[\[92196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to take steps to help women affected by changes to women's state pension age; and whether is his Department's policy to engage with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into the communication of those changes.

Laura Trott:

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it was going to make the State Pension age the same for men and women as a long-overdue move towards gender equality. Both the High Court and Court of Appeal have found no fault with the actions of the DWP, under successive governments dating back to 1995, finding we acted entirely lawfully and did not discriminate on any grounds. The Supreme Court refused the claimants' permission to appeal.

This Government is committed to providing a financial safety net for those who need it, including when they near or reach retirement. The Government also understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living which is why, in addition to the £37 billion of support we have provided for cost of living pressures in 2022-23, we are acting now to ensure support continues throughout 2023/24. To ensure stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement the Government has announced £26bn in cost of living support for 2023/24. This includes Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable households, an additional £1 billion to help with the cost of household essentials next year and the amended Energy Price Guarantee which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

We continue to provide support to help older people stay in and return to work. The Government recognises the challenges faced by some aged 50 and over, which is why we are providing a new enhanced offer through our 50+ Choices programme for people aged 50 and over to remain in and return to work.

The Ombudsman's investigation is ongoing and confidential. Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private". The Department is fully cooperating with the PHSO investigation.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Underpayments

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[90886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 5.13 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, whether his Department plans to assign any of the £280 million allocated to target benefit fraud, error and debt to the large-scale exercise to correct state pension underpayments; and if he will make a statement on the progress of that exercise.

Laura Trott:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: As set out in the Autumn Statement, the government is taking further action to protect taxpayer money by investing an extra £280 million between now and 2024-25 to target fraud, error and debt across the benefits system. This funding will expand fraud and error capabilities in DWP to help prevent abuse of the system. The expansion will better equip DWP to proactively review and correct Universal Credit claims that are at risk of fraud, and help prevent, detect and correct overpayments across the entire benefits system.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that these historical State Pension errors, made by successive Governments, are addressed as quickly as possible. We have set up a dedicated team and devoted significant resources towards completing the exercise, with further resources being allocated throughout 2023. In line with previous commitments to publish further Management Information related to the State Pension underpayments exercise around the time of fiscal events. DWP will be publishing the next update shortly.

Overall, Official Error Underpayment rates for State Pension remain low, at 0.5% of benefit expenditure.

■ Universal Credit: Work Capability Assessment

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[92346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will review the criteria used to determine whether cancer survivors are fit for work under the Work Capability Assessment for Universal Credit.

Tom Pursglove:

It is important to ensure that those affected by cancer receive the most appropriate support, and we have worked closely with representative organisations to improve the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process for those affected by cancer.

In 2013, the categories of cancer treatments under which a claimant can be treated as having limited capability for work-related activity (LCWRA) were expanded to include individuals awaiting, receiving, or recovering from treatment by way of

chemotherapy and radiotherapy, irrespective of route. Although there is no automatic award, in these cases, there is a presumption that the claimant will be treated as having LCWRA, subject to suitable evidence being provided by a professional, such as a GP, oncologist, or clinical nurse specialist.

■ **Women against State Pension Inequality**

Lisa Nandy:

[92197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 13 June 2022 to Question 14559 on Women Against State Pension Inequality, for what reason a Minister has not met with representatives of Women Against State Pension Inequality since 29 June 2016; and if he will meet with that group.

Laura Trott:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer given by Hon Guy Opperman MP on 19 July 2022 to question number [36754](#).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Postmaster Suspension Pay

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business) (Kevin Hollinrake): [\[HCWS384\]](#)

The *Bates et al v Post Office Ltd* Common Issues Judgment in March 2019 found that clauses in postmaster contracts allowing Post Office to withhold remuneration during any period of suspension were unreasonable under the Unfair Contract Terms Act; Post Office was not entitled to rely on them.

Before March 2019, postmasters were not remunerated during the period of any contract suspension. Post Office has subsequently changed this policy, resulting in postmasters continuing to receive remuneration during a period of suspension.

As part of its efforts to address historical operational issues and implement improvements to its company culture, Post Office is setting up a compensation scheme to provide compensation to postmasters who did not receive remuneration during a suspension period. Post Office will write out to current and previous postmasters to offer them compensation based on the remuneration they were not paid and any associated consequential losses they may have suffered.

The Government will provide funding to Post Office to cover compensation to postmasters for unpaid suspension remuneration and any associated consequential loss. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will provide oversight to ensure that this compensation is delivered quickly and effectively to affected postmasters.

The Government continues to support Post Office in its efforts to review company practices and ensure that historical operational errors are not repeated.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Security Update on Surveillance Equipment

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Oliver Dowden): [\[HCWS386\]](#)

The Government keeps the security of our personnel, information, assets, and estate under constant review. In this context, the Government Security Group has undertaken a review of the current and future possible security risks associated with the installation of visual surveillance systems on the government estate. The review has concluded that, in light of the threat to the UK and the increasing capability and connectivity of these systems, additional controls are required.

Departments have therefore been instructed to cease deployment of such equipment onto sensitive sites, where it is produced by companies subject to the National Intelligence Law of the People's Republic of China. Since security considerations are

always paramount around these sites, we are taking action now to prevent any security risks materialising.

Additionally, departments have been advised that no such equipment should be connected to departmental core networks and that they should consider whether they should remove and replace such equipment where it is deployed on sensitive sites rather than awaiting any scheduled upgrades. Departments have also been advised to consider whether there are sites outside the definition of sensitive sites to which they would wish to extend the same risk mitigation.

Government will continue to keep this risk under review and will take further steps if and when they become necessary.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Finances 2022/2023

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chris Heaton-Harris): [\[HCWS385\]](#)

On Monday I introduced the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Bill that allows six weeks, and potentially a further six weeks, for a Northern Ireland Executive to form. In line with the intent of that Bill, I firmly believe that the best way forward for Northern Ireland is for the political parties to come together and form an Executive.

However, in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly there has been no Executive Budget set for the financial year 2022/23. Departments therefore have not had clear totals against which to manage their finances.

Not only did the former Executive fail to agree a Budget, but the Ministers who remained in their posts during the 6 months from May to October 2022, left Northern Ireland's public finances with a black hole of some £660m.

I am extremely disappointed that this situation has come to pass. It remains my belief that for Northern Ireland to be a great place where people can live and work, there must be a locally elected, stable, and accountable devolved government, which continually prioritises the things that matter in everyday life for the majority of local people.

I believe that it is right to give the parties another opportunity to form an Executive, which the Bill I introduced on Monday will do.

In the meantime, I recognise that the people of Northern Ireland must be protected in future by bringing the public finances under control today. Difficult choices cannot be deferred any longer without continuing the lamentable trend of storing up ever deeper trouble. I am therefore setting a Northern Ireland Budget for 2022/23 today. I will bring forward legislation for this Budget in a Budget Bill in due course.

It should be noted that the Spending Review 2021 set the largest annual Block Grant in real terms since the Devolution Act in 1998. This provides around 21% more funding per head than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. Yet, NI Ministers have failed to protect the public finances and secure the delivery of public services. This

is a failure of their responsibility to the public, typically those most in need which worsens the impacts of the reductions that must now be delivered. If the necessary diligence over Northern Ireland's public finances had been applied by NI ministers during the last 6 months, these measures would not be needed now.

Action needs to be taken now to protect the current and future health of Northern Ireland's public services.

External factors impacting this Budget

Energy

The Budget position I am setting out today recognises the challenges that face all of us in the UK over the cost of energy. Through the Energy Prices Act 2022, the UK Government is taking positive measures to ensure Northern Ireland citizens receive the support they need in the absence of an Executive. However, I do expect the Northern Ireland Departments, as some of the largest users of energy in the region, to be pragmatic in their approach to their energy bills by ensuring they are getting the best, most cost-effective deals possible. This will reduce pressures on the NI budget and in turn help protect funding to serve the public.

Public Sector Pay and Public Service Transformation

This budget recognises the cost of living challenges that our frontline workers are facing by increasing public sector pay and ensuring the Living Wage threshold is met. I appreciate that these pay awards will not go as far as many workers would wish. Until there is the right level of income to NI Departments, this position on public sector pay is the most that can be afforded within the budget available and without cutting into important front line services. A future Executive needs to get to grips with a sustainable approach to public sector pay alongside the work needed to transform public services. The Executive needs to reform as this work should not be further delayed.

Northern Ireland Ministers have long failed to demonstrate prudent fiscal management. Almost 10 years on from the commitments made in the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements to put Northern Ireland's public finances onto a sustainable footing, long promised public service transformation and fiscal sustainability has not been delivered.

2022/23 Budget allocations

I set out below the resource and capital allocations which I consider to be an appropriate settlement for Northern Ireland departments.

In deciding on these allocations I have engaged intensively with the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) to understand the needs of departments, the various views on budget priorities and the savings needed to balance the budget. I am grateful to them for their engagement. I have also met with Sir Robert Chote, the Chair of the NI Fiscal Council and received a range of representations from public groups and individuals.

Non-ring fenced resource funding

On the resource side, this Budget position delivers:

For Health, this Budget provides £7.28bn in funding; an increase of £228m above 2021/22 spending, which included significant COVID-19 funding, or £786m if we compare to last year's funding excluding the one-off COVID-19 funding. This will protect spending to address the critical health pressures in Northern Ireland. It also ring-fences funding for abortion services, as ensuring availability of services is a statutory duty on me as Secretary of State.

For Education, this Budget provides £2.6bn in funding, which is an additional £286m on top of last year's spending (after excluding accounting for one-off COVID support in 2021-22). This will protect spending for programmes such as Free School Meals, Home to School Transport, the Extended Schools and Sure Start programmes, all of which support those who need it most. However, even this level of increase will require significant reductions in current spending trajectory levels to live within budgetary control totals. This will affect funding for high spend areas such as the Education Authority's Block Grant and the Aggregated Schools Budget. As some costs are demand driven, this will have impacts. However, these are unavoidable given the scale of the overspend risk facing the department. The required action to curtail expenditure must be taken by all Education spending areas in order to live within budget.

This Budget protects funding for the most vulnerable by protecting spending levels in the Department for Communities at current levels and ensuring programmes like the Discretionary Support Grant can continue. It also increases resources for Northern Ireland's critical infrastructure networks with a 4.4% increase in the Department for Infrastructure resource spending (after excluding one off COVID support in 2021-22). This increase will sustain vital infrastructure support that is so important to the NI Economy. We recognise steps will also need to be taken to improve Translink's sustainability through uprating Translink fares. This will help to reduce the budget pressure, whilst ensuring that the increase remains below the level of inflation.

Elsewhere, the level of protections and increased spending afforded to Health and Education, with lesser increases also afforded to Infrastructure and Justice, means some reductions in the Department for Economy, while departments including The Executive Office and Departments of Finance and Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, remain broadly at similar levels as last year.

Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits

For capital, this Budget provides continuing investment and enables key flagship projects to progress including the York Street Interchange and A5 and A6 road schemes. It also ensures sufficient funding to meet departmental capital commitments that can progress in the absence of an Executive.

Budget 2023/24

As I set out in the opening to this Statement, the need for action to put Northern Ireland public finances on a sustainable footing can no longer be put off. Steps need to be taken now to address the systemic issues that are facing public services and address the long term sustainability of NI's finances.

Importantly, I remain firmly of the view that the right people to be taking such decisions for future Budgets and public services are locally elected and accountable Ministers sitting in a fully functioning devolved government.

I will continue to work towards the restoration of an Executive but I recognise that consideration needs to be given to a sustainable and strategic budget outlook for 2023/24.

If the Executive has been restored in time for a budget for 2023/4, the UK Government will continue to work constructively with Executive Ministers, including on a sustainable budget that works for the people of Northern Ireland and supports economic growth.

However, in the absence of an Executive, the Government's priorities for next year's budget will be to deliver a fair outcome for all taxpayers and citizens in Northern Ireland. We will work to put Northern Ireland's finances on a sustainable long-term footing. That means we will need to consider wide-ranging options for revenue-raising and review all spending.

My department will continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Department of Finance ahead of the next financial year to identify what steps could be taken. Amongst the options we will examine will be water charges and/or increasing income from regional rates, to ensure citizens in Northern Ireland, and all taxpayers are treated fairly and the 2023/24 Budget is balanced from the outset of the year.

I must repeat I am only bringing forward this Budget legislation because the Northern Ireland parties have failed to display the necessary political leadership for which they were elected. I look forward to the Executive getting back to work and taking these decisions in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland.

Attachments:

1. Annex A [Northern Ireland Finances 2022 2023 Annex A.docx]