



Daily Report

Wednesday, 30 November 2022

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 30 November 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	■ Energy Charter Treaty	13
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	7	■ Energy Efficiency Taskforce	13
■ Alternative Fuel Payments: District Heating	7	■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing	13
■ Aquariums and Zoos: Energy	7	■ Energy: Billing	13
■ BioYorkshire: Finance	8	■ Energy: Meters	14
■ Bulb Energy	8	■ Energy: Prices	15
■ Business: Closures	8	■ Energy: Taxation	16
■ Business: Government Assistance	8	■ Equal Pay: Minimum Wage	16
■ Business: Investment	9	■ Fireworks: Regulation	17
■ Business: Investment Returns	9	■ Government Departments: Regulation	17
■ Catapult Centres	10	■ Hospitality Industry	18
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: EU Law	10	■ Minimum Wage: Poverty	18
■ Education: Finance	10	■ New Businesses	19
■ Electricity: Disconnections	11	■ Research: Finance	19
■ Energy Bills Rebate: District Heating	11	■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance	21
■ Energy Bills Rebate: Landlords	11	■ Tourist Attractions: Energy	21
■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters	12	DEFENCE	21
■ Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes	12	■ Air Force: Training	21
■ Energy Bills Rebate: Rural Areas	12	■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme	22
		■ Armed Forces: Discharges	23
		■ Armed Forces: Housing	24

■ Armed Forces: Sexual Harassment	24	■ Schools: Admissions	36
■ China: Armed Forces	25	■ Schools: Finance	36
■ Defence Equipment: Contracts	25	■ Special Educational Needs: Hampshire	36
■ Defence Serious Crime Unit	25	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	38
■ Electronic Purchasing Card Solution	26	■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control	38
■ F-35 Aircraft: Costs	28	■ Compost: Peat	38
■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Construction	28	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: EU Law	39
■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts	28	■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Regulation	39
■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel	29	■ Eggs: Marketing	40
■ Harland and Wolff	29	■ Forests: Commodities	40
■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review	29	■ Greyhounds: Animal Welfare	41
■ Ministry of Defence: Health and Social Care Levy	30	■ Pets: Fireworks	42
■ Ministry of Defence: Small Businesses	30	■ Rivers: Access	42
■ Navy: Training	30	■ Sewage: Environment Protection	42
■ Salerno Mutiny: Prerogative of Mercy	31	■ Sewage: Pollution	43
■ Veterans: Training	31	■ Water Companies: Fines	43
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	31	■ Water: Standards	44
■ Broadband: Low Incomes	31	■ Wildlife: Smuggling	44
■ Digital Technology: Business	32	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	45
■ Film and Television	32	■ Ethiopia: Sexual Offences	45
■ Social Enterprises: Expenditure	33	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Languages	45
EDUCATION	34	■ Indonesia: Earthquakes	45
■ Oak National Academy	34	■ Iran: Baha'i Faith	46
■ Private Education: VAT	35	■ Iran: Capital Punishment	46
		■ Iran: Demonstrations	47

■ Iran: Human Rights	47	■ Integrated Care Boards	60
■ Iran: Russia	48	■ Locums: Costs	60
■ Iran: Sanctions	48	■ Medical Records: Data Protection	60
■ Iran: Yemen	48	■ Menopause: Mental Health Services	61
■ Mexico: Homicide	49	■ Mental Health Services	61
■ Sierra Leone: Democracy	49	■ Mental Illness: Drugs	62
■ South Africa: UN Security Council	50	■ NHS: Databases	62
■ South Sudan: Health Services	50	■ NHS: Protective Clothing	63
■ Tigray: Armed Conflict	50	■ Pancreatic Cancer	64
■ Tigray: Peace Negotiations	51	■ Pneumococcal Diseases: Vaccination	64
■ Ukraine: Clothing	51	■ Postural Tachycardia Syndrome: Research	65
■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid	52	■ Pregnancy Tests	65
■ Zimbabwe: HIV Infection	52	■ Prescriptions	65
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	52	■ Respiratory System: Diseases	66
■ Cancer: Nurses	52	■ Stevens-Johnson Syndrome	66
■ Cancer: Waiting Lists	53	■ Strokes: Ambulance Services	66
■ Childbirth	53	■ Surgery: Cumbria	67
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	54	■ Tobacco: Sales	67
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	54	■ Vaccination	67
■ Dental Services	55	■ Veterans: Disability Aids	68
■ Dental Services: Children	55	■ Veterans: Hearing Impairment	68
■ Doctors	55	■ Visual Impairment: Health Services	68
■ Epilepsy: Children	56	■ Working Hours: Health	68
■ Glaucoma: Health Services	56	HOME OFFICE	69
■ Health Incentives Scheme	57	■ Asylum	69
■ Health Services: Children	57	■ Asylum: Sefton	69
■ Health Services: Weather	57	■ Asylum: Social Security Benefits	70
■ Health: Disadvantaged	58	■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation	70
■ Healthy Start Scheme	58		
■ Hormone Pregnancy Tests Expert Working Group	58		
■ Hospitals: Construction	59		
■ Influenza: Vaccination	59		

■ Chief Fire Officers	70	■ Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights	81
■ China: Intelligence Services	71	■ Ministry of Justice: Sick Leave	82
■ Community Policing	71	■ Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave	83
■ Community Policing: Mental Health Services	72	■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition	83
■ Counter-terrorism: Public Places	72	■ Terminal Illnesses: Children	84
■ Criminal Investigation: Drugs	72	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	84
■ Detention Centres	73	■ European Regional Development Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund	84
■ Disclosure and Barring Service	73	■ Independent Faith Engagement Review	85
■ Immigration: Applications	74	■ Social Services and Children: Local Government Finance	85
■ Members: Correspondence	74	■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland	85
■ Police Custody: Vulnerable Adults	74	SCOTLAND	86
■ Police: Night-time Economy	76	■ Scotland Office: Information Officers	86
■ Police: Recruitment	76	■ Scotland Office: Information Services	86
■ Police: Stun Guns	77	■ Scotland Office: Public Expenditure	86
■ Refugees: Afghanistan	77	TRANSPORT	86
■ Sleeping Rough: Prosecutions	77	■ Motorways: Safety	86
■ Violent and Sex Offender Register	78	TREASURY	87
■ Visas: Care Workers and Health Professions	78	■ Companies House	87
■ Wind Power: Migrant Workers	79	■ Credit Cards: Fraud	87
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	79	■ Development Aid	88
■ Exports: Austria	79	■ Development Aid: Asylum	88
■ Small Businesses: Trade Promotion	80	■ Duty Free Allowances	89
■ UK Trade with EU: Trade Barriers	80	■ Economic Growth	89
JUSTICE	80	■ Energy: Taxation	90
■ Gender Recognition: Convictions	80	■ Financial Services: Fraud	92
■ Legal Aid Scheme: Civil Proceedings	81		

■ Independent Office for Police Conduct	93	■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud	107
■ Mortgages: Interest Rates	94	■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses	107
■ Pet Foods: VAT	94	■ State Retirement Pensions	108
■ Repossession Orders: Landlords and Mortgages	95	■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad	108
■ Swimming: VAT	96	■ Unemployment	109
■ Tax Avoidance	96	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	110
■ Treasury: Civil Servants	97	DEFENCE	110
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	97	■ China: Armed Forces	110
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	97	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	116
■ Conversion Therapy	98	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	116
■ Equality: Surveys	99	■ Contingencies Fund Advance – Energy Price Guarantee (Domestic)	116
■ Public Finance: Equality	99	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	116
WORK AND PENSIONS	100	■ Online Safety Bill - Government Amendments	116
■ Access to Work Programme	100	■ Publication of the Government Response to Public Consultations for Improving the UK's Cyber Resilience	117
■ Carer's Allowance	100	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	119
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	101	■ UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement in Principle	119
■ Employment Schemes: Contracts	102	JUSTICE	120
■ Employment Services: Disability	102	■ Government's response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review consultation	120
■ Employment Services: Young People	103	TREASURY	121
■ Employment: Disability	104	■ The Double Taxation Convention between the United Kingdom and Brazil	121
■ Employment: Economic Growth	105		
■ Household Support Fund	105		
■ Occupational Health: Small Businesses	106		
■ Restart Scheme	106		
■ Social Security Benefits: Feltham and Heston	106		

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Alternative Fuel Payments: District Heating**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[96524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason it is no longer his policy to provide £50 million funding for heat network customers under the domestic alternative fuel payment.

Graham Stuart:

Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount on energy bills for the small percentage of households that will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced in the coming weeks.

Heat network consumers receive support through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) and will not receive the Alternative Fuel Payment, which has been designed to support households using alternative fuels. As the EBRS will be scaled back from April 2023 the Government will bring forward a route to deliver bespoke support for those on heat networks. Further details will be published shortly.

■ **Aquariums and Zoos: Energy**

Alex Sobel:

[\[93628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the impact of the cost of energy on zoo-license holders; and if he will take steps to include (a) zoos and (b) aquariums on the list of protected sites in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme is available to all eligible non-domestic energy customers, including businesses, charities and the public sector, and will provide a discount on the wholesale costs of gas and electricity. This includes Zoos and Aquariums on eligible non-domestic energy supply contracts.

Zoos and aquariums are not included on the list of Approved Designated Services as set out in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code.

In order for a critical site or service to be placed on the Protected Sites List, the site must meet the criteria set out in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code guidance.

■ **BioYorkshire: Finance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[92265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with UK Research and Innovation about the timetable for providing support to the BioYorkshire programme; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

During my visit to York in March I met with UKRI and local partners to discuss the BioYorkshire initiative.

The York and North Yorkshire proposed devolution deal signed on 1 August commits UKRI to seek opportunities to support the development of the BioYorkshire cluster. The York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership will convene an inaugural meeting of the BioYorkshire Steering Group on 29 November 2022 with representation from UKRI on the Group. UKRI continue to engage with senior stakeholders to increase understanding of the evolving strategy and strengths of the BioYorkshire cluster.

■ **Bulb Energy**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[87714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November to Question 83507 on Bulb Energy, whether his Department knew how much money had been drawn down under the funding agreement by Bulb Energy when a deal was agreed with Octopus Energy on the sale of Bulb.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: Yes. The Government scrutinises and approves draw down requests received by Teneo under the funding agreement. To date, the total drawn down amount under the funding agreement is £1.143bn.

■ **Business: Closures**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[93551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the number of business deaths in the last quarter in (a) the UK and (b) each G7 country.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 3rd November 2022 to Question [72282](#).

■ **Business: Government Assistance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to assist businesses to grow; and how much funding his Department has allocated to financing business accelerators.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government seeks to make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business, creating a supportive environment that gives businesses the stability and confidence they need to invest and grow.

The Hon. Member will be aware that York University recently joined the Northern Accelerator partnership, which supports academics to turn their world-leading research into investible businesses. This initiative is supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund. Because funding for this and other business accelerators is provided through a range of programmes and partner organisations, an overall total is not available.

Business: Investment**Rachael Maskell:**[\[93573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of levels of business investment on levels of (a) regional and (b) local equality.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces UK estimates of Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), a measure of capital investment in the UK. In May 2022, a set of experimental statistics were published mapping the regional distribution of UK GFCF[1].

There is no recent assessment of the potential impact of levels of business investment on levels of regional or local equality.

[1] Experimental regional gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) estimates by asset type, ONS

Business: Investment Returns**Rachael Maskell:**[\[93575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when investing in business, what time period the Exchequer seeks for an economic return on its investment.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government considers relative value for money for all uses of Exchequer funding, using HMT Green Book methodology so that every pound of taxpayers' money is invested wisely to provide a return to the people and businesses of the UK.

As per the Green Book, the most appropriate time period of analysis for each type of investment is applied.

■ Catapult Centres**Chi Onwurah:** [\[90793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Paragraph 5.65 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751 published on 17 October 2022, whether the Government plans to create new Catapults in the next 12 months.

George Freeman:

The £1.6bn funding announced on 17 November 2022 will allow Innovate UK to fund the UK's Catapult Network to continue supporting innovation and de-risking the transition from research to commercialisation by providing access to world-leading facilities, skills, and equipment across the UK.

Innovate UK are responsible for ensuring the UK's Catapult Networks are maximising industrial R&D, co-investment and benefit to the UK economy and any new Catapults would need to be assessed against criteria for new Catapults to ensure they are addressing market failures or clear strategic opportunities and would be subject to sustainable funding plus Ministerial agreement.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: EU Law**Sir John Hayes:** [\[93446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November to Question 75765 on Civil Service: EU Law, how many documents held by his Department relating to past attempts at deregulation contain both the expressions out of scope and business burdens.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

We are not aware of there ever having been a business burdens depository within BEIS and we are unable to account for across government.

Departmental-wide information within BEIS on the number of individual documents which contain the phrase "out of scope" and "business burdens", and which relate to previous activity around reducing unnecessary business burdens, could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Education: Finance**Dan Carden:** [\[93615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increasing funding for the further and adult education sectors on (a) the skills gap, (b) the low carbon transition and (c) targets for retrofitting, including fitting heat pumps.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is investing £3.8bn in further education and skills over the course of this Parliament, to ensure people can access high-quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling

up. This includes funding for programmes to support green skills crucial to the net zero transition.

In September, BEIS launched a £9.2m skills competition to fund training for people working in the energy efficiency, retrofit and low carbon heating sectors in England.

■ **Electricity: Disconnections**

Beth Winter:

[\[93694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many customers have had their electricity supply disconnected for (a) debt and (b) other reasons between October 2020 and October 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem collects data on disconnections of supply for debt. From October 2020 to end of December 2021 (latest data published) energy suppliers disconnected the electricity supply to 21 customers for debt. Suppliers must only use disconnection as a last resort. They must not disconnect customers in debt unless they have offered a range of repayment options and have exhausted all other means to recover a debt.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: District Heating**

Ian Mearns:

[\[84872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish guidance on the Energy Bills Support Scheme for households who receive their energy through private heat and power networks.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: The Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount on energy bills for the small percentage of households who will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. This includes those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an electricity supplier. Eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced in the coming weeks.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Landlords**

Steve McCabe:

[\[92080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support households who have not received the £400 cost of living energy bills discount because their landlord has been given a payment for the main meter.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: Households with a domestic electricity supply will automatically receive the Energy Bills Support Scheme discount of £400. To ensure that this energy support reaches the intended beneficiaries, the Government has introduced regulations so that intermediaries, such as landlords, are required to pass on the financial benefit to their tenants. These pass-through requirements apply

to tenants who do not have a direct relationship with an energy supplier, for example, where there is a main meter. If the landlord does not pass on the benefit, the tenant can pursue recovery of the benefit as a civil debt through the county courts.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Meters**

Judith Cummins: [\[94778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help people whose energy meters are supplied by wholesalers receive Energy Bill Discount Vouchers.

Graham Stuart:

EBSS Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount off energy bills for the small percentage of households who are not reached through the main EBSS fund. This includes those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an electricity supplier.

The Government is not yet in a position to communicate eligibility of individual groups for the Alternative Funding. The Government will be communicating the details over the coming weeks.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes**

Mark Garnier: [\[93525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the £400 arising from the Energy Bill Support Scheme will be delivered to park home residents.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave my Hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch on 8th November to Question [78634](#).

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Rural Areas**

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[93715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that support for energy bills is available to rural households that are not on the gas and electricity grids.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[93716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to help support off-grid consumers with their energy bills.

Graham Stuart:

The Alternative Fuel Payment scheme will provide a one-off payment to UK (GB and NI) households that use alternative fuels for heating, such as heating oil or LPG, instead of mains gas. This will ensure that those who do not benefit from the Energy Price Guarantee for fuel they use to heat their homes receive support for the cost of the fuel they do use.

£400 of EBSS Alternative Funding will be made available for those who do not have a direct contract with an electricity supplier or an electricity meter and will therefore not receive the Energy Bills Support Scheme directly.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[93604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the UK will exit the Energy Charter Treaty.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has been a strong advocate for ECT modernisation. At the Energy Charter Conference on 22 November, the decision to adopt the modernised Treaty was postponed. In light of this, the UK is monitoring developments, including the positions of other Contracting Parties.

■ Energy Efficiency Taskforce

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[93509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in what way he expects the Energy Efficiency Taskforce to gather the opinions of local authorities; and whether local authority representatives will form part of that Taskforce.

Graham Stuart:

More details on the scope and membership of the Taskforce will be announced in due course.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Rented Housing

Dan Carden:

[\[93618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will introduce legislation to mandate a minimum EPC requirement of band C for rental properties with (a) new tenancies from 2025 and (b) existing tenancies in 2028.

Graham Stuart:

The Department consulted on raising the energy performance standards in the domestic private rented sector to Energy Performance Certificate Band C for new tenancies from 2025 and all tenancies by 2028 in the winter of 2020/2021. The Government carefully analysed the responses and will publish its response in due course.

■ Energy: Billing

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[86690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to make it easier for customers to claim unused credit on their energy accounts.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has no plans to intervene in this area. Customers in Great Britain can claim unused credit at any time and their supplier must refund them promptly unless they have reasonable grounds not to.

■ Energy: Meters**Beth Winter:**[\[93691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that energy suppliers are (a) identifying and (b) supporting customers self-disconnecting from prepayment meters.

Graham Stuart:

The Government expects suppliers to take proactive steps to identify vulnerable consumers and offer them the necessary support. Under Ofgem's licence conditions, energy suppliers have an obligation to identify self-disconnecting and self-rationing Prepayment Meter customers proactively.

Ofgem's rules also require energy suppliers to agree repayment rates with a customer in arrears and to take into account a customer's ability to pay, when calculating repayment rates for Prepayment Meter customers in debt. Energy suppliers are also expected to provide extra support by making emergency and friendly-hours credit available to all Prepayment Meter customers.

Beth Winter:[\[93692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to enforce energy suppliers' Standard Licence Condition 28 which stipulates that prepayment meters should only be used where it is safe and reasonably practicable.

Graham Stuart:

The enforcement of licence conditions is the responsibility of Ofgem, the independent regulator of the GB gas and electricity markets.

Beth Winter:[\[93693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what data his Department holds on breaches of the requirement that energy suppliers must provide notice of at least seven working days in advance of a change from credit mode to the prepay method on a smart meter.

Beth Winter:[\[93695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many customers have been left without energy supply as a result of an energy supplier's decision to switch smart meters from credit mode to prepayment in the past year.

Beth Winter:

[93696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many energy customers did not receive at least seven working days notice in advance of a change from credit mode to the prepay method on a smart meter.

Graham Stuart:

The Department does not hold this data. The energy regulator Ofgem is responsible for ensuring energy suppliers comply with their regulatory obligations, including the requirement that suppliers must provide notice of at least seven working days in advance of the change from credit mode to the prepay method on the smart meter.

The Government welcome the steps Ofgem is taking to ensure energy supplier compliance with their obligations, including through their Market Compliance Review into customers struggling with bills.

■ Energy: Prices

Beth Winter:

[93690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that energy suppliers have policies and procedures to identify vulnerable customers.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has every confidence in Ofgem as the independent regulator of the energy market in Great Britain. Having completed a review of how suppliers support customers in vulnerable situations, Ofgem is working with seven suppliers found to have minor weaknesses in their processes. The ten suppliers found to have moderate to severe weaknesses are required to implement rapid and robust improvements to their processes. Failure to act fast enough may result in Ofgem taking enforcement action. More details are available at:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/ofgem-completes-review-how-suppliers-support-customers-vulnerable-situations>.

Patrick Grady:

[95876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with (a) energy workers and (b) consumers on price regulation for Distribution Network Operators.

Patrick Grady:

[95877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what consideration he has given to the potential merits of reopening the public consultation on the RIIO-ED2 Draft Determinations, in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem, as the independent energy regulator, uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns they can make on investment, in a way that allows the funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon

network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem, the network companies and stakeholders, including consumer interest groups, throughout the development of the price controls. The new electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, and Final Determinations from Ofgem were published on 30th November.

■ Energy: Taxation

Beth Winter: [\[93697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of levying a windfall tax on the profits of distribution network operators.

Beth Winter: [\[93698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of imposing a temporary dividend ban on the profits of distribution network operators.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem, as the independent energy regulator, uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns they can make on investment. This allows for funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and the network companies throughout the development of the price controls. The next electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, with Final Determinations from Ofgem expected shortly.

■ Equal Pay: Minimum Wage

Apsana Begum: [\[93679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the level of the minimum wage on the ethnicity pay gap.

Apsana Begum: [\[93680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of the minimum wage on (a) women, (b) ethnic minorities, (c) disabled people and (d) young people in the next three years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government has repeatedly increased the National Living Wage, with black and minority ethnic individuals, women, and disabled people among those more likely to benefit from these increases. The LPC evidence suggests that this has reduced the gender and ethnicity pay gaps since its introduction in 2016.

In April 2023, the Government will increase the National Living Wage (NLW) for workers aged 23 years and over by 9.7% to £10.42, remaining on track to achieve its manifesto commitment for the NLW to equal two-thirds of median earnings by 2024.

We will publish an updated Impact Assessment next year when laying the relevant legislation.

■ **Fireworks: Regulation**

Beth Winter:

[\[93687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November to Question 79319 on Fireworks: Regulation; if he will make an estimate of the cost of establishing a licensing system for the (a) purchasing by and (b) sale of fireworks to members of the public.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department has no plans to make such an estimate of the cost of establishing a licensing system for the (a) purchasing by and (b) sale of fireworks to members of the public.

■ **Government Departments: Regulation**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the regulatory impact assessments collated by his Department across Government between 2001 and 2015, to which Government Departments contributed individual assessments.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

All available regulatory impact assessments should be publicly accessible on [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk), alongside the relevant piece of legislation.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the (a) directorates and (b) task forces in his Department which (i) initiated and (ii) conducted regulatory impact assessments of submissions by Government Departments in reviewing the regulatory costs and impact associated with new legislation.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Each Government Department initiates and conducts its own regulatory impact assessments.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the documents audited by his Department between 2001 and 2015, submitted by other Government departments, that included a bar chart entitled current assessment of business burdens, assessed by (a) overall cost (b) share of cost arising from EU sources.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

We are not aware of there ever having been a business burdens depository within BEIS and we are unable to account for across government.

■ Hospitality Industry

Rachael Maskell: [\[93580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential challenges facing the hospitality sector in 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

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

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

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

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced in his Autumn Statement that there will be an extended and increased relief for retail and hospitality businesses worth almost £13.6 billion. This is the most generous in year business rates relief in over 30 years, outside of Covid-19 support.

Rachael Maskell: [\[93581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to provide long term support to the hospitality sector.

Kevin Hollinrake:

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

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

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme ensures that businesses are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced in his Autumn Statement that there will be an extended and increased relief for retail and hospitality businesses worth almost £13.6 billion. This is the most generous in year business rates relief in over 30 years, outside of Covid-19 support.

■ Minimum Wage: Poverty

Apsana Begum: [\[93684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of the minimum wage on (a) child, (b) fuel, (c) food and (d) other forms of poverty in the next three years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In April 2023, the Government will increase the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42, remaining on track to achieve the manifesto commitment for it to reach two-

thirds of median earnings by 2024. The National Minimum Wage rates, designed for younger workers, will increase by a similar amount.

We expect the increases to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage to give a pay rise to over 2.5 million workers, supporting the lowest paid and most vulnerable in our society. For example, a full-time worker on the National Living Wage will see their annual earnings rise by over £1,600.

■ New Businesses

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that all businesses have access to business accelerators.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Business accelerators are widely available with approximately 180 programmes currently operating. These accelerators are backed by investment firms, corporations, and the public sector. They range from national programmes such as NatWest Accelerator, with thirteen hubs across the UK, to those with a local focus, such as Phase One based at the University of York and supporting businesses in their first year working within the digital, creative, technology and science sectors.

The availability of virtual and hybrid accelerator programmes means that all businesses potentially have access to these services, wherever they are located in the UK.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[92202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 November 2022, HCWS 376 on Programmes:

Announcement of £484 million immediate investment for the UK R&D and fusion sectors, from which budget that funding will be drawn; and whether he expects that funding would be impacted by the UK's potential future participation in Horizon Europe.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[92203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 November 2022, HCWS 376 on Programmes:

Announcement of £484 million immediate investment for the UK R&D and fusion sectors, whether that funding represents an alternative to the UK's future participation in Horizon Europe.

George Freeman:

The Government's preference remains association to Horizon Europe and while we push for association, we must also invest in the UK's world leading R&D sector.

At the 2021 Spending Review, the Government committed to funding association to EU R&D programmes, including Horizon Europe and that if the UK is unable to

associate to Horizon Europe, the funding allocated to association will go to UK government R&D programmes.

As a result of the EU's delays, the Government are making an immediate investment from the EU programme funding allocation to support the UK R&D sector as we continue to pursue association.

Chi Onwurah: [\[93535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the ONS data on Business Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, published 22 November 2022, for what reason regional data on spend is no longer available; and whether he plans to ask the ONS to help provide that information.

George Freeman:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an independent body, and this update is part of a wider programme of work to improve economic statistics and data capture. The ONS published estimates of country and regional breakdown of expenditure on R&D in the UK by sector of performance for 2018, 2019 and 2020 in table 4 of their Gross Expenditure on R&D release on 22 November 2022, with business enterprise R&D shown separately and with English regions aggregated into three groups.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is in contact with the ONS and they intend to publish further detailed data on regional spend in due course.

Chi Onwurah: [\[93719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of ONS's decision not to publish a calculation of R&D as a percentage of GDP; and what assessment he made of the impact of only knowing the overall effect on GDP at the end of 2023.

George Freeman:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an independent body, and this update is part of a wider programme of work to improve economic statistics and data capture. Its 22 November 2022 release estimated that £59.7bn was invested in UK R&D in 2019, increasing to £61.8bn in 2020. The ONS has not published R&D as a percentage of GDP, to make clear that they have not yet incorporated the improvements to the measurement of R&D in the business and higher education sectors into the calculations of GDP.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) understands the complexity and timelines involved in feeding the R&D changes through to GDP as part of National Accounts and looks forward to this calculation in due course. If the ONS had made the calculation, BEIS believes it would have produced a figure between 2.6% and 2.7% of GDP for 2019 and between 2.9% and 3.0% for 2020.

■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is providing to help support local business clusters.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is supporting clusters across the country through targeted measures such as the Strength in Places Fund and is trialling new approaches of working more closely with high potential places through £100 million of investment for Innovation Accelerators.

Innovate UK also recently invited proposals for a series of Health and Life Science Accelerators that will support the development of early-stage health and life science businesses across the UK. These accelerators will recruit both existing spinouts and new start-ups to test their ideas and develop new concepts. The programmes are expected to start between January 2023 and March 2025.

■ Tourist Attractions: Energy

Alex Sobel:

[\[93629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising energy costs on the life support systems for animals at zoos and aquariums; and if he will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has introduced a package of measures to provide businesses and households with relief from soaring energy costs this winter. The Government recognises the impact rising energy prices is having on both domestic and non-domestic consumers, including zoos and aquariums that are providing vital life support systems for animals. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme is available to all eligible non-domestic energy customers, including businesses, charities and the public sector, and will provide a discount on the wholesale costs of gas and electricity. This includes Zoos and Aquariums on eligible non-domestic energy supply contracts.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force: Training

John Healey:

[\[96565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) UK and (b) non-UK pilots are receiving training at each RAF base as of 25 November 2022.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The information requested can be found in the table below:

RAF STATION	NUMBER OF UK PILOTS RECEIVING FLYING TRAINING ON 25 NOVEMBER	NUMBER OF NON-UK PILOTS RECEIVING FLYING TRAINING ON 25 NOVEMBER
RAF Benson	10	~
RAF Brize Norton	30	-
RAF Coningsby	10	~
RAF Cranwell	80	-
RAF Lossiemouth	10	-
RAF Marham	10	-
RAF St Mawgan	10	-
RAF Shawbury	70	20
RAF Valley	30	~
RAF Waddington	10	-
RAF Wittering	~	-
Total	270	20

This data covers individuals undertaking initial flying training in the Military Flying Training System and on the platform specific Operational Conversion Units but does not include qualified pilots undertaking refresher training, individuals gaining further qualifications on specific platform type and those maintaining their flying currency.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, data have been rounded to the nearest 10, where "-" denotes zero and "~" denotes a number less than or equal to 5. Due to the rounding methods used, totals may not always equal the sum of the parts. When rounding to the nearest 10, numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

Luke Pollard:

[96650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will undertake a review of the compensation amounts offered under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme against compensation awarded to civilians who sustain similar injuries.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) is currently undergoing its Quinquennial Review (QQR) which takes place every five years to ensure that the scheme remains fit for purpose. The QQR is due to be published in spring 2023.

■ Armed Forces: Discharges**Clive Efford:**[\[95766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel have been medically discharged from the armed forces due to permanent hearing loss or damage following following involvement in (a) the Afghanistan War from 2001 and (b) Iraq War from 2003.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Between 1 January 2001 and 30 September 2022, a total of 2,170 UK Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of hearing loss/damage, of which 1,455 had been previously deployed to either Afghanistan and/or Iraq. The breakdown of the figure is provided below:

1,119 had been deployed to Afghanistan.

839 had been deployed to Iraq.

Personnel may have deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq therefore the breakdown cannot be summed. The medical discharges included in this response cannot be attributed to deployment to Afghanistan or Iraq. This means that the hearing loss/damage may not have been sustained when on deployment and the subsequent medical discharge may have occurred a number of years after deployment.

Luke Pollard:[\[96647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of piloting a new medical discharge process within the armed forces to allow personnel to be diagnosed with more than one condition, both physical and mental, as the reason for discharge.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

When a medical condition or fitness issue affects a member of the UK armed forces, their ability to perform their duties is assessed. If they are unable to perform their duties and alternative employment within the armed forces is not available, personnel may then be medically discharged. The medical reason for the discharge is recorded and categorised following detailed individual assessment in each case. As part of that assessment all relevant medical conditions, both physical and psychological, are taken into consideration when awarding the final medical grading.

Luke Pollard:[\[96649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on the roll-out of the Cortisone programme to help ensure that those medically discharged from the armed forces receive their medical history documents within one month of leaving.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Programme CORTISONE will collectively link MOD systems with NHS systems in all four home countries, providing the ability for the transfer of a service person's healthcare record in electronic form to a GP practice at the end of their service. This will be available to anyone leaving the services and not just those being medically discharged.

The programme has now delivered a live connection to the NHS, which has been used successfully to transfer COVID-19 vaccination status for service personnel. The next stage of the programme will be the roll-out of connectivity with pilot GP practices which will commence from June 2023.

The Defence Medical Services facilitates the transfer of healthcare information for all service personnel when they leave the Armed Forces. Personnel leaving the Armed Forces are provided with a summary of their medical care, known as an FMed133, and advised to provide this to their NHS General Practitioner (GP) on registration. Personnel are advised to register with an NHS GP one to three months before discharge, and the GP may decide they require a copy of the full Defence Healthcare Record.

■ Armed Forces: Housing**John Healey:**[\[96563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 75786 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many service personnel were living in grade four single living accommodation in each region of the UK as of 25 November 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The attached table shows a count of Service personnel who occupied Permanent Single Living Accommodation Grade four on 25 Nov 22. The table has been broken down by region as recorded on the Joint Personnel Administration System.

Attachments:

1. Service Personnel - Permanent Single Living Accommodation [Copy of Copy of 20221129-PQN_22-23_2022_14071 (96563)- Healey- Table of data.xlsx]

■ Armed Forces: Sexual Harassment**Sarah Atherton:**[\[96665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence from Air Marshal Richard Knighton to the Defence Committee on 8 November 2022, HC 726, whether the zero tolerance policy for unacceptable sexual behaviour will apply to trainees in phase one military establishments.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The 'Zero tolerance to unacceptable sexual behaviour: A victim / survivor focussed approach' policy sets out a presumption of discharge from the Service for those who are found, after investigation and to the civil standard of proof (balance of probability),

to have engaged in unacceptable sexual behaviour. It applies to all Armed Forces personnel, including Phase 1 trainees.

■ **China: Armed Forces**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[93483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to impose sanctions on former RAF personnel involved in training Chinese Armed Forces without permission.

James Heappey:

The Department has no evidence that anyone has breached the high threshold of the Official Secrets Act (OSA), but if any evidence were to be forthcoming, we would not hesitate to bring criminal charges. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) are engaging with the individuals already involved to ensure they are fully aware of the risk of prosecution under the OSA.

The Government's National Security Bill (led by the Home Office) will capture a range of relevant activity and provide additional possible routes to prosecution. The MOD are also conducting a review of the use of confidentiality agreements across Defence, with the aim of providing additional contractual levers to prevent individuals breaching security.

■ **Defence Equipment: Contracts**

Dave Doogan:

[\[96651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the his Department's budget was spent on equipment orders placed with the UK arms of multinational companies.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence made payment to over 9,000 individual suppliers in financial year 2021-22. As such, details of how much was spent on equipment orders placed with the UK arms of multinational companies could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Defence Serious Crime Unit**

Sarah Atherton:

[\[96663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Fourth Special Report of Session 2021-22 of the Defence Committee entitled Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report, what recent progress his Department has made on providing funding for the establishment of the Victim and Witness Care Unit of the Defence Serious Crime Unit.

Sarah Atherton:

[\[96664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date the new Victim and Witness Care Unit of the Defence Serious Crime Unit will be operational.

Sarah Atherton:

[\[96666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what will be the main activities of the new Victim and Witness Care Unit of the Defence Serious Crime Unit; and how many full-time employees it will have.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Victim Witness Care Unit (VWCU), part of the Defence Serious Crime Command, will focus on supporting the needs of victims and witnesses. Funding has been secured for the establishment of the VWCU and it is expected to be operational in March 2023. The VWCU will ensure access to independent welfare support based on individual needs. It will provide victims and witnesses with direct guidance and support on how the Service Justice System works and services available, ensuring they are well informed throughout the process.

■ Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[\[96585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's government procurement card spending over £500 on travel and stationery for the month of April 2021, published on 14 July 2021, for what reason there is a difference between the total spending of £674,470.73 for all items in the spreadsheet named Stationery and the total of £507,000.67 included in the spreadsheets named Stationery Pivot and epcData Travel-Stationery.

Alex Chalk:

Following an internal review, the Ministry of Defence can confirm that an administrative error occurred which resulted in a reporting discrepancy within the April 2021 MOD travel and stationery Government Procurement Card (GPC) transparency report.

The raw data contained within the tab titled "Stationery" contains all throughput against the Stationery Lodged Card for the month of April 2021. The tabs titled "sheet 1", "ePCDataTravelStationery" and "stationery pivot" contain incorrect values with regards to Stationery spend and will be updated as a matter of priority. It has also been identified as part of this investigation that multiple MOD GPC transparency reports contain transactions under the value of £500.

The Stationery breakdown below provides confirmed transactional throughput for this spend category during the April 2021 billing period.

SUPPLIER	SPEND
Banner	£389,910.44
XMA	£284,650.29
Total Spend	£674,470.73 (1942 transactions)

SUPPLIER	SPEND
Total Spend (Over £500)	£509,861.75 (309 transactions)

Emily Thornberry:[\[96586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's government procurement card spending over £500 on travel and stationery for the month of May 2021, published on 9 September 2021, for what reason there is a difference between the total spending of £704,378.62 for all items in the spreadsheet named Stationery and the total of £623,865 included in the spreadsheets named Stationery Pivot and epcData Travel-Stationery.

Alex Chalk:

Following an internal review, the Ministry of Defence can confirm that an administrative error occurred which resulted in a reporting discrepancy within the May 2021 MOD travel and stationery Government Procurement Card (GPC) transparency report.

The raw data contained within the tab titled "Stationery" contains all throughput against the Stationery Lodged Card for the month of May 2021. The tabs titled "ePCDataTravel-Stationery" and "stationery pivot" contain incorrect values with regards to stationery spend and will be updated as a matter of priority.

The Stationery breakdown below provides confirmed transactional throughput for this spend category during the May 2021 billing period.

SUPPLIER	SPEND
Banner	£464,188.78
XMA	£240,189.84
Total Spend	£704,378.62 (2064 transactions)
Total Spend (Over £500)	£519,192.45 (299 transactions)

Emily Thornberry:[\[96587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's monthly publications of government procurement card spending over £500 on stationery, for what reason there is a difference between the total costs of £3,885.04 incurred in the month of November 2021 and the average costs of £637,282.92 incurred in the other 11 months of that year.

Alex Chalk:

Following an internal review, the Ministry of Defence can confirm that a reporting error occurred impacting the November 2021 MOD travel and stationery Government Procurement Card (GPC) transparency report. This was most likely due to the file

becoming corrupt on upload. The specific date and reason for this file corruption is unknown at this time, but will be investigated.

The correct data has been arranged to be uploaded as a matter of priority. The Department can confirm the correct figure for November 2021 Stationery spend (**over £500**) was £540,383.74 (301 transactions).

■ **F-35 Aircraft: Costs**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[93484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the estimated (a) unit and (b) full life cost of the F-35B.

Alex Chalk:

The Unit Recurring Flyaway cost of an F-35B from Low-Rate Initial Production, Lot 14, which comprises the last finalised contract, is \$101 million.

The estimated through-life cost of the UK's F-35 programme is £18.76 billion, which is based on the currently approved 48 F-35B aircraft.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Construction**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[93480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what method of construction is planned for the Fleet Solid Support Ships.

Alex Chalk:

Blocks and modules for the Fleet Solid Support ships will be constructed at Harland & Wolff's facilities in Belfast and Appledore, and this work will also support a significant UK-based supply chain. Some build work will also take place at Navantia's shipyard in Cadiz in Spain, in a collaboration allowing for key skills and technology transfer to the UK from a world-leading shipbuilder.

The entire final assembly will be completed at Harland & Wolff's shipyard in Belfast, to Bath-based BMT's British design.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts**

John Healey: [\[96562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89735 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Supply Chains, whether all social value commitments associated with the Fleet Solid Support Ships contract will be undertaken in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The social value commitments will greatly benefit the UK.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel

Mr Kevan Jones:

[93475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 89759 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel, whether the prime contractor must prioritise the inclusion of British steel in the design.

Alex Chalk:

Steel requirements for the Fleet Solid Support ships will be confirmed by the preferred bidder, Team Resolute, on award of the Manufacture contract.

Responsibility for sourcing steel for the ships will rest with the prime contractor, who will make their steel requirements known to the UK steel industry and procure the steel in accordance with Cabinet Office guidelines.

Team Resolute has indicated that it intends to use UK-sourced steel wherever it is practicable to do so.

■ Harland and Wolff

Mr Kevan Jones:

[94709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times officials from his Department have met with Harland & Wolff representatives since 1 January 2020.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[94710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have met with representatives of Astra Asset Management UK in the last two years.

Alex Chalk:

No records have been located of any meetings between officials and representatives of Harland & Wolff since 1 January 2020 in connection with the Fleet Solid Support ship competition.

No meetings have been held with representatives of Astra Asset Management UK in the last two years.

Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly and can be found on gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-with-external-organisations-in-the-ministry-of-defence>

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Mr Mark Francois:

[93481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects to complete the update to the Integrated Review.

Mr Ben Wallace:

On 21 September 2022, the Government announced its intention to refresh the Integrated Review. This work is being lead by Professor John Bew. We expect this

work, along with a refresh of the Defence Command Paper, to be completed ahead of the Treasury's Spring Statement.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Health and Social Care Levy**

John Healey: [\[96564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the funding provided to his Department to cover the Health and Social Care Levy has been returned to the Treasury.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Department will retain the funding provided to cover the Health and Social Care Levy for this financial year but will return future years' funding to HMT.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Small Businesses**

John Healey: [\[93462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many R&D contracts handed out to SMEs by his Department have led to production orders for that capability since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

The Department does not hold this information in the format requested and it can only be provided at disproportionate cost. We recognise that SMEs are a vital source of growth and innovation in the UK, and we are making good progress towards our internal target that 25% of procurement spend should go to SMEs by 2022, both directly with Ministry of Defence and indirectly through the supply chain.

■ **Navy: Training**

John Healey: [\[96581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the impact of the removal of Elbit from Project Selborne on the timetable for delivering the Royal Navy's Future Naval Training Programme.

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, as the Prime Contractor delivering Project Selborne, are responsible for ensuring its delivery. Any specific impact on the timetable for delivery of the Future Naval Training Programme will depend on the outcome of the negotiations which are currently underway with Elbit Systems UK regarding their

involvement in Project Selborne, therefore I am unable to comment further at this time.

■ **Salerno Mutiny: Prerogative of Mercy**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[94894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will grant a pardon to people sentenced for the Salerno Mutiny.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Salerno mutiny of 1943 has been previously debated in the House of Commons and examined by legal authorities and the Department. Our position has not changed.

■ **Veterans: Training**

Luke Pollard:

[\[96648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making a requirement on those leaving the military to undertake existing courses hosted by (a) the military and (b) third sector to help serving personnel transition out of the military.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Ministry of Defence provides all Service leavers with resettlement support. This is designed to help personnel leaving the Armed Forces prepare for civilian life, including a successful transition to employment, self-employment or a wider vocational outcome such as education, retirement or working with Third Sector organisations, tailored to the wishes of the individual.

Resettlement support is available from two years prior to leaving and two years after discharge. The provision entitles Service leavers to duty time, financial assistance and access to Career Transition Partnership (CTP) Services. The CTP provision includes workshops, seminars, career consultancy, resettlement training advice and vocational training, together with job finding support.

From 31 May 2022, all Service leavers have been automatically registered with CTP and can only opt-out by informing their CTP career consultant. In the event that a Service leaver has opted out of CTP services but wishes to use their entitlements to CTP provision, they may do so by contacting the CTP direct at any point up to two years post-discharge.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Broadband: Low Incomes**

Matt Vickers:

[\[94918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support low income households with their broadband bills.

Julia Lopez:

DCMS has taken steps to address the affordability concerns of people from low-income households by successfully negotiating with broadband providers to introduce a range of low-cost, high-quality social tariffs, available in 99% of the UK, for as little as £12 for those on Universal Credit and other means-tested benefits.

We also secured a set of [commitments](#) from broadband providers to support people through the global rise in the cost of living. These commitments include more manageable payment plans and allowing households to switch to cheaper packages without penalty.

We continue to engage with the sector. On 29 November, DCMS convened a ministerial roundtable of leaders from across the sector, Ofcom as well as consumer groups to discuss further steps to support low-income families.

■ Digital Technology: Business**Matt Vickers:****[94917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to increase use of digital documentation to reduce business costs.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises that the UK's economic future, prosperity and productivity are all reliant on continued and growing success in digital technology.

DCMS is playing its part by taking steps to create a secure and trusted digital identity marketplace that can operate across economic sectors. Enabling the use of trusted digital identities in the UK will provide individuals with an alternative to offline manual identity proofing, which are estimated to cost between £800 million to £2 billion per annum*. This work is strongly supported by businesses as it is estimated that a fully functioning digital identity market that could generate direct annual economic benefits to the UK economy between £743m and £938m*.

The Central Digital and Data Office is also working with government departments to baseline service performance and capture any opportunities for efficiency through digital transformation. This includes opportunities to reform non-digital transactions and processes such as manual handling of paperwork.

* [Digital identity and attributes De Minimis Assessment \(2022\)](#)

* [Economic Benefits of Digital Identity, Deloitte, 2020 \(unpublished\)](#)

■ Film and Television**Matt Vickers:****[94916]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support the UK's film and television industry.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to ensuring that British film and television industries are able to deliver for audiences, expand their businesses, and offer opportunities for cast and crew across the UK.

In recent years, the Government's actions have helped the film and TV industry bounce back from the pandemic, with production now stronger than ever. This includes the £500 million Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, supporting over 100,000 jobs and productions worth more than £3 billion. In addition, the Culture Recovery Fund for Independent Cinemas supported over 200 independent cinemas to ensure that films could be screened in cinemas following the pandemic.

To build on this, and support the sector to not only survive but thrive, the government has taken further action. This includes the Government's current £1.6 million annual funding of the British Film Commission, which has driven a near doubling of UK studio capacity, the £28 million UK Global Screen Fund, which is expanding the global reach of UK independent content, and the continued success of our screen sector tax reliefs (for film, high-end TV, animation and children's TV), which in 2021-22 provided £792 million of support for over 1000 projects. HM Treasury has published a consultation on reforms to the audio-visual tax reliefs, which aims to ensure they remain world leading and continue to best serve the needs of creative companies.

In addition, the Government intends to update the existing legislative framework to ensure that our public service broadcasters have the tools to grow and flourish in the digital age. Our proposed reforms will, for example, ensure that public service content is always carried and easy to find on connected devices and major online platforms, including on smart TVs, set-top boxes and streaming sticks.

These and other reforms set out in our Broadcasting White Paper, published earlier this year, will ensure that our television and film industries continue to prosper in our new media landscape – an outcome that is good for both audiences and the creative economy.

■ Social Enterprises: Expenditure**Rachael Maskell:**[\[96623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding the Government has provided to Social Enterprises in each of the last five years.

Rachael Maskell:[\[96624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to increase the size of the social enterprise sector; and if she will make a statement.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of (a) social and (b) for-profit business working together on society and the environment; and if she will make a statement.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[96626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has taken recent steps to help support business owners to launch new social businesses.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government supports the social enterprise sector in a number of ways. This includes;

- targeted support for social enterprises in disadvantaged places through the £4.1million Social Enterprise Boost Fund, that will provide support such as training, networking and peer learning and includes £1.5million of grants for entrepreneurs to kickstart their social enterprises;
- access to finance, including £485 million of dormant assets funding that has been allocated to social investment, supporting thousands of charities and social enterprises across England;
- increasing participation in delivering public services through the £900,000 VCSE Contract Readiness Fund announced in September;
- support for start-ups including the government backed Start Up Loans Company that provides loans of up to £25,000 per director to support entrepreneurs to start and grow a business.

The Government recognises the social enterprise sector's contribution to society and the economy and welcomes collaboration between social enterprises and other forms of socially oriented business who are working to achieve positive societal benefits.

EDUCATION

■ Oak National Academy

Andrew Lewer:

[\[95924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of converting the Oak National Academy to an arms-length body producing publicly-funded material to support the curriculum.

Andrew Lewer:

[\[95925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the 43 million funding for the Oak National Academy on revenue for teacher authors.

Andrew Lewer:

[95926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with (a) teachers and (b) education organisations on the potential merits of the Oak National Academy being a publicly funded body.

Nick Gibb:

Oak National Academy is continuing to work with teachers across the country, giving them and their pupils access to high quality digital curriculum resources which are free, optional and adaptable. Oak is helping to tackle longstanding challenges, such as teacher workload, a significant driver of retention issues in the sector.

Over 30,000 teachers continue to use Oak each week. A significant proportion of the £43 million set aside to support Oak is expected to be provided directly to schools, publishers, and other organisations for the creation of resources. As an integral part of the process to set up Oak as an arm's length body, the Department produced a business case, which included an assessment of potential market impact. This business case was published on GOV.UK, and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oak-national-academy-business-case>.

Where Oak needs to use existing third party content, such as texts, Oak will seek to have an overarching licence with relevant licensing bodies wherever feasible so the copyright holder receives full payment for their work.

Oak's future and operating model was discussed with teachers and others in the sector in multiple forums. Ministers held roundtable discussions with teachers and school leaders from a range of schools and multi academy trusts. The Department held a series of public webinars for teachers, school leaders and sector bodies. Plans for Oak's future have also been discussed with teacher representatives, including school leaders and unions, and teacher viewpoints have been collected through surveys.

■ Private Education: VAT

Bridget Phillipson:

[96600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2022 to Question 92176 on Private Education: VAT, by which body the research by Baines Cutler was (a) commissioned and (b) funded.

Nick Gibb:

Baines Cutler Solutions Ltd and KPMG were commissioned by the Independent Schools Council (ISC) to conduct a review of the potential effect of the introduction of 20% VAT on the independent schools' sector.

The report is publicly available at: <https://www.isc.co.uk/media/5926/isc-vat-full-report-1018-for-circulation.pdf>.

■ **Schools: Admissions**

David Johnston: [\[95935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of adding a box for a second parent or guardian on the School Admission Application Form.

Nick Gibb:

The School Admissions Code currently prohibits requiring both parents to sign the Common Application Form when they are applying for a school place for their child. This makes the process easier for families where it may not be possible for two parents to sign the form and ensures that a child is not discriminated against because they only have one parent. It also ensures that a child's family situation is not unlawfully considered in the application process.

In cases where parents are separated and both parents are involved in their child's upbringing, parents will need to agree between themselves on the school they wish their child to attend and on which parent will sign the application form.

■ **Schools: Finance**

Munira Wilson: [\[96655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, how the additional funding for the core schools budget will be distributed.

Munira Wilson: [\[96656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will publish revised provisional allocations under the national funding formula for (a) schools, (b) high needs and (c) central school services for 2023-24 to reflect the additional funding announced for schools in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will set out plans for the allocation of the additional funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement shortly.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Hampshire**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[93593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of educational choice for parents of children with SEND in North East Hampshire constituency.

Claire Coutinho:

A joint local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection of Hampshire was undertaken by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) in March 2020. At the time, inspectors identified no significant areas of weakness in SEND services.

The department's SEND data collection is about a full local authority and does not analyse by districts. Nor do we collect data on the level or range of choices of provision in each local area.

Local authorities are statutorily responsible (under the Children and Families Act 2014) for keeping their local offer of services and provision for children and young people with SEND under review, in co-production with parents, young people and educational providers. It is for local authorities to ensure there are sufficient good school places for all pupils, including those with SEND. The Hampshire local offer provides some information about schools by major towns in Hampshire, but not by districts. Further information can be accessed here:

<https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/results.page?familychannel=6-1-3>.

Under the Act, parents or young people have the statutory right to request that a particular school, further education college in England or other educational institution is named in their Education, Health, and Care plan.

In March 2022, the department announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) amounting to a new investment of over £1.4 billion. This funding is to support local authorities to deliver new places for academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25, and to improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision (AP). This funding forms part of the £2.6 billion the department is investing between 2022 and 2025 and represents a significant, transformational investment in new high needs provision. It will support local authorities to deliver new places in mainstream and special schools, as well as other specialist settings, and will also be used to improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings.

Hampshire's provisional high needs revenue funding allocation for 2023/24 will be £187.2 million, a 24% per head increase over two years on the amount of high needs funding allocated in 2021/22. In addition to this funding, the 2022 Autumn Statement announced that the national core schools budget (covering both mainstream schools and high needs) will increase by £2 billion in 2023/24 and a further £2 billion in 2024/25, over and above totals announced in the 2021 Spending Review. We will confirm plans for how this additional funding will be allocated shortly.

Hampshire received a total of just over £31.3 million through the HNPCA announced in March 2022. This amount represents funding for financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24 and will help the local authority to create new places and improve facilities for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities or who require alternative provision. Prior to that, the local authority received just below £6.8 million through its 2021/22 HNPCA funding announced in April 2021.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control****Cat Smith:****[92252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to increase support for (a) the development of avian influenza vaccines and (b) other research to help tackle the outbreak of that disease.

Mark Spencer:

Defra continues to invest in avian influenza research and monitors the situation in Europe and globally. Any future decisions on disease control measures, including the use of vaccination, will be based upon the latest scientific, ornithological, and veterinary advice.

In conjunction with the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), Defra monitors the development and availability of vaccines for use to protect against avian influenza and as a control measure during avian influenza outbreaks, as they are put forward for marketing authorisation by vaccine manufacturers.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) leads government funded research on animal disease control and alongside the Government's continued investment in the Avian Influenza National Reference Laboratory and APHA's Weybridge site, earlier this year an eight-strong consortium 'FluMap' led by APHA and funded by Defra and the Biotechnology and Biosciences Research Council (BBSRC) was launched that received £1.5 million in funding to develop new strategies to tackle avian influenza outbreaks. This year-long research project will help build our understanding in a number of key areas, including why the current virus strains have formed larger and longer outbreaks and understanding transmission and infection in different bird populations. The research gaps addressed by the consortium were identified from the recent STAR-IDAZ International Research Consortium [Animal Influenza Research Review](#) and knowledge gaps identified during recent avian influenza outbreaks.

The [STAR-IDAZ International Research Consortium](#) is a global initiative aiming to coordinate research programmes at the international level and to contribute to the development of new and improved animal health strategies for priority diseases, infections and issues.

■ Compost: Peat**Martyn Day:****[51837]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy and (b) ease of access to peat-free mixes for (i) ornamental growers and (ii) retailers, in the context of the health and growth needs of many floral species.

Martyn Day:

[\[51838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Sale of horticultural peat to be banned in move to protect England's precious peatlands, published on 27 August 2022, what assessment he has made of (a) the time that will be required for the horticultural industry to complete its transition to peat-free products and (b) whether any exemptions will be required within the sector.

Trudy Harrison:

Ministers are aware that the horticulture industry has already made significant progress in terms of developing peat free alternatives and sourcing suitable material but recognise that certain sectors face particular technical obstacles and will need longer to make the transition to peat free.

The proposed ban will be framed in such a way as to provide time limited exemptions for the professional horticulture sector, in order to allow time to overcome these barriers. Officials are currently consulting with horticultural industry representatives to inform our detailed proposals.

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

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2022 to Question 75766 on Regulation, whether (a) director generals and (b) directors in his Department conducted regulatory impact assessments of new EU legislative between 2001 and 2015.

Mark Spencer:

The information requested is not held centrally and would incur disproportionate cost to obtain. The EU conducts impact assessments on legislation it produces. During the UK's membership of the EU, Defra produced appropriate proportionate analysis in relevant cases in line with Better Regulation Principles. Where legislation impacted on businesses, Defra was committed to the principles of better regulation and conducting proportionate analysis to prevent unjustifiable regulatory burden.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Regulation**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2022 to Question 75766, if she will list those occasions where the Department has been tasked with delivering an audit of regulatory burdens identifying both UK and EU origins and has generated a document for central Whitehall collation and review between 2001 and 2015.

Mark Spencer:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Where regulations are creating unjustifiable burdens on business, Defra is committed to reform them to ensure we support our environment

and our economy alike. A public list of all Defra regulations is collated on the Defralex website.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[93449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2022 to Question 75766, which section within her Department was responsible for supplying on request from the Cabinet Office an estimate of the cost of EU regulatory burdens; and when those requests were made between 2001 and 2015.

Mark Spencer:

The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Better Regulation Principles are always at the heart of Defra regulation and ensuring business and civil society are free from unnecessarily burdens and that regulation is proportionate are core priorities for Defra.

■ Eggs: Marketing

Cat Smith:

[\[93570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the 16-week protection period for the marketing of free-range eggs following the imposition of Government measures to control the spread of avian influenza on poultry farmers that are complying with those marketing rules.

Mark Spencer:

Egg Marketing Standards provides a 16-week derogation period during which the free-range description can be retained on eggs even if hens have been housed.

Defra currently has no plans to review this derogation period. However, in recognition of the pressures the egg sector is currently facing, particularly rising input costs alongside the impacts of Avian Influenza, Defra has granted a concession which will apply if the housing orders that are currently in place in England exceed the 16 week derogation period. This concession will allow producers and packers, on a one-off basis, the option to use either direct print to pack or an affixed label on free-range boxes. Accompanying clear and transparent point of sale signage should also be in place to ensure consumers are not misled and to avoid undermining consumer confidence in the free-range industry.

■ Forests: Commodities

Alex Sobel:

[\[93630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to take steps to include all forest risk commodities in the secondary legislation that will implement schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021.

Alex Sobel:

[\[93631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent progress she has made on bringing forward secondary legislation to operationalise the

due diligence systems established in schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021; and if she will include (a) cattle, (b) soy, (c) palm, (d) cocoa and (e) timber within the scope of that legislation.

Alex Sobel:

[93632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to regulate the import of (a) cattle and (b) derived products from deforested land under schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

The UK Government has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to help tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. We recently ran a consultation to seek views on how we should implement Environment Act provisions, including which commodities we should regulate through the first round of secondary legislation, and have since published a summary of responses, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-illegal-deforestation-in-uk-supply-chains>.

While a wide number of commodities have played and continue to play a role in driving global deforestation, we identified seven key commodities in consultation that are responsible between them for driving the majority of recent and ongoing deforestation. These commodities were: cattle (beef and leather), cocoa, coffee, maize, rubber, palm oil, and soy. The consultation also sought evidence on other commodities driving deforestation. We will take into account consultation responses in decisions around which commodities to regulate.

Whilst timber and timber products are also linked to widespread deforestation, the United Kingdom's Timber Regulations already prohibit the placing on the market of illegally harvested timber or timber products, and so these products are out of scope.

■ **Greyhounds: Animal Welfare**

Fleur Anderson:

[93670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government is taking steps to increase regulations on animal welfare within greyhound racing.

Rebecca Pow:

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 already allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a failure to provide for that animal's welfare needs. This includes where greyhounds are raced at greyhound racing tracks or kept at trainers' kennels. Further to these general provisions, specific welfare standards, including the requirement to have a veterinary surgeon present while dogs are running, for all greyhound racing tracks in England are set out in the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010. We have no plans at this time to introduce more regulation.

Pets: Fireworks**Beth Winter:**[\[93688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November to Question 77605 on Pets: Fireworks, what steps her Department has taken to evaluate the benefits to household pets and wildlife of reducing the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks for public sale from 120dB to 90dB.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy leads on legislation regarding the sale of fireworks. We engage with BEIS to ensure that animal welfare needs are represented in the development of policy. Defra has not evaluated the benefits of reducing the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks for public sale.

Rivers: Access**Fleur Anderson:**[\[93675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps the Government has taken to improve public accessibility to Britain's rivers.

Trudy Harrison:

Access on regulated waterways can be granted through licenses from the appropriate navigation authority. Access on unregulated waterways can be arranged through voluntary access agreements. We will continue to be supportive of navigation authorities' work to enhance and develop their waterways to encourage greater levels of access. Local authorities can also apply for bathing water status.

A total of 25 projects funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund across England have included activities to improve access and enjoyment of inland waterways, generally as part of a wider project. These projects total almost £16m of investment. The £80m Fund overall has funded 159 nature-based projects to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment.

Sewage: Environment Protection**Layla Moran:**[\[93623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many Environmental Information Regulations relating to sewage cases have been submitted to her Department since 1 January 2005; and how many have been rejected on (a) being manifestly unreasonable, (b) relating to unfinished documents or incomplete at date of receiving and (c) protection of environment.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra only retains Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests for three years. Cases prior to this have been destroyed in line with our retention schedule.

The number of EIR requests managed in Defra with 'sewage' in the case title since 2019 is 14.

- a) None of those were refused under regulation 12(4)(b) of the EIRs which relates to manifestly unreasonable.
- b) None of those were refused as under regulation 12(4)(d) of the EIRs which relates to material which is still in the course of completion, to unfinished documents or to incomplete data.
- c) None of those were refused as under regulation 12(5)(g) of the EIRs which relates to the protection of the environment to which the information relates.

■ Sewage: Pollution

Layla Moran:

[93622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sewage release incidents took place in the UK in 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

Sewage release data is available online:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/dataset/21e15f12-0df8-4bfc-b763-45226c16a8ac>

■ Water Companies: Fines

Layla Moran:

[93625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of financial penalties on water companies on the behaviour of those companies.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government believes that financial incentives reinforced by a strong regulatory framework does make a positive impact on water company behaviour. During the 2019 price review (PR19), Ofwat set specific performance commitments for water companies. These commitments set the minimum standards of service that companies are expected to attain. In November 2022, Ofwat announced financial penalties of almost £150 million applying to 11 water companies, as a result of underperformance in areas such as water supply interruptions, pollution incidents and internal sewer flooding. This money will rightly be returned to customers through water bills in the next financial year.

Additionally, where companies have failed to meet their statutory or licence obligations, regulators can take more formal enforcement action. For example, in 2019, Ofwat imposed a £126 million penalty package on Southern Water, following failures in the operation of their wastewater treatment works and misreporting performance information at these sites. This package included a rebate of £123m to customers through their bills and a £3 million fine. Following this, Ofwat has pushed Southern Water to improve financial resilience and outcomes for customers and the environment, which, in September 2021, resulted in a £1 billion injection of equity from Macquarie Asset Management. Macquarie have acknowledged the performance issues of Southern and have committed to delivering a turnaround showing how strong financial regulation can positively impact performance.

On Wednesday 30th November we announced we will be channelling money from water company fines into schemes to improve the environment.

■ Water: Standards

Layla Moran:

[\[93627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she provides additional resources to community groups and water companies in areas with excellent or good bathing water status to help maintain water quality.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government does not fund water company investment, water companies raise funds through private mechanisms and customer bills which is highly regulated. However the EA works closely with partners to help maintain water quality and deliver bathing water regulations.

■ Wildlife: Smuggling

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[93594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help tackle the illegal wildlife trade.

Trudy Harrison:

The United Kingdom is taking steps to help protect endangered animals and plants from poaching and illegal trade to benefit wildlife, local communities and the economy, and protect global security.

HMG has committed over £46 million between 2014 and 2022 on work to directly counter illegal wildlife trade (IWT), including through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. Our actions include: training border force agents and building capacity through the British military to train rangers and disrupt poaching in targeted African countries; developing behaviour change campaigns to discourage purchases of wildlife products; supporting legislative reform to increase penalties and conviction rates for wildlife crime; and helping communities to protect the wildlife they rely on for their livelihoods.

We are also contributing £250 million to the Global Environment Facility between 2018-2022, which includes the world's biggest fund for tackling IWT, the Global Wildlife Programme (GWP), supporting IWT projects across 32 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In June this year, at the Stockholm +50 meeting, Lord Goldsmith announced the UK Government's pledge of £330m to the eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF8) covering the period 2022 – 2026. The GEF8 replenishment delivered a record breaking \$5.33bn with a 46% increase in biodiversity funding. This includes the Wildlife Conservation for Development programme which will combat Illegal and High-Risk Wildlife Trade through a supply-chain approach to curbing poaching, disrupting trafficking, and reducing demand for illegal, unsustainable, and high zoonotic-risk wildlife within and between countries.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Ethiopia: Sexual Offences****Naz Shah:**[\[95865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will support transparent, accountable justice for survivors of sexual violence in Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is committed to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. We have consistently called for an end to the appalling violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual violence, committed by all sides to the conflict in northern Ethiopia, and for the perpetrators of these acts to be held to account and support for victims. We therefore welcome the recent the agreement to implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy aimed at accountability, redress for victims, reconciliation, and healing.

We continue to support the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE). We will work with the Ethiopian Government and civil society in their efforts to hold perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses to account, including building the capacity of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission through the UK's Human Rights and Peacebuilding programme (HARP).

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Languages**Alyn Smith:**[\[95932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff in his Department speak at least one of the following languages (a) Cantonese, (b) Hokkien, (c) a Turkic language spoken in China, or (d) Tibetan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The FCDO currently has fewer than 5 UK based staff with valid FCDO qualification in Cantonese. We have no UK based staff with valid FCDO qualifications in Hokkien, Turkic languages spoken in China or Tibetan. We do not hold figures on staff who speak languages to a lower level, who qualified outside of the FCDO, or those whose qualification has lapsed. Our embassies across the world also employ staff locally who are fluent in their native language.

■ Indonesia: Earthquakes**Colum Eastwood:**[\[96660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to provide bilateral support to the Indonesian government following the earthquake in West Java.

Colum Eastwood:[\[96661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to support (a) aid agencies, (b) charities and (c) NGOs following the earthquake in West Java.

David Rutley:

The Foreign Secretary contacted Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi following the earthquake on 21 November. The Indonesian Government has not formally requested bilateral assistance. UK officials are in close touch with the Indonesian authorities and aid partners who continue to monitor the situation on the ground in Cianjur, West Java. This includes the Indonesia National Agency for Disaster Countermeasure (BNPB) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Iran: Baha'i Faith**Fleur Anderson:**[\[93665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to work with the international community to address reports of the persecution of the Baha'i community by the Iranian state.

David Rutley:

The Baha'i community in Iran is systematically persecuted by the Iranian regime. Reports indicate the regime redoubled repression, with expropriation, repossession of land, destruction of homes, and increasing detention of Baha'is. Minister for the Middle East and Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, stated on 5 August that Iran's persecution of religious minorities was a serious human rights violation and could not be tolerated by the UK.

The former Minister for Africa reiterated our commitment to holding Iran to account at the Westminster Hall debate of 11 October. The UK raised the Baha'i at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee on 26 October and pressed for the inclusion of the Baha'i in the UNGA Resolution which passed on 16 November. We continue to raise human rights with the regime at all appropriate opportunities, both directly and in multilateral fora.

Iran: Capital Punishment**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[84931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart about the imposition of the death penalty on protestors in that country.

David Rutley:

The sentencing to death of protestors in Iran is abhorrent. Minister Rutley condemned this tragic development in the House on 16 November. The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and will challenge the Iranian regime's violent response to protests. On 14 November, the UK sanctioned 24 individuals for violations of

human rights in the repression of protests. This is on top of sanctions on 10 October against Iran's 'so called' morality police and seven security officials. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful Human Rights Council resolution to establish a UN investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations. The FCDO is also working closely with the United States and partners to seek the removal of Iran from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

■ Iran: Demonstrations

Patrick Grady:

[\[93569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a response to Early Day Motion 581, "Protests in Iran".

David Rutley:

The sentencing to death of protestors in Iran is abhorrent. I [Minister Rutley] condemned this tragic development in the House on 16 November. The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and will challenge the Iranian regime's violent response to protests. On 14 November, the UK sanctioned 24 individuals for violations of human rights in the repression of protests. This is on top of sanctions on 10 October against Iran's 'so called' morality police and seven security officials. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful Human Rights Council resolution to establish a UN investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations. The FCDO is also working closely with the United States and partners to seek the removal of Iran from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

■ Iran: Human Rights

Theresa Villiers:

[\[90761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to apply Magnitsky sanctions to members of the Iranian Government implicated in human rights abuses.

David Rutley:

The UK is committed to challenging the Iranian regime's violent response to recent protests. On 14 November, the UK sanctioned 24 individuals for violations of human rights in the repression of protests. This was on top of the sanctions of 10 October against the so-called 'morality police' and seven security officials. The UK is also working with international partners to hold Iran to account for its violent response to the protests. This includes through the full range of multilateral fora, including the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Security Council, G7 and the UN General Assembly Third Committee.

Iran: Russia**Sarah Atherton:**[\[96662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that Russia provided Iran with British and U.S. military equipment seized in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK condemns Iranian support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has made this clear to Iran including when the Iranian Chargé D'affaires was summoned on 3 October. Iran's supply of drones to Russia violates UN Security Council Resolution 2231. On 20 October, new UK sanctions targeted Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps is already sanctioned. We are monitoring reports that Russia is providing Iran with British and U.S. military equipment seized in Ukraine. We will continue to work with international partners to ensure Russia and Iran are held to account.

Iran: Sanctions**Mr David Lammy:**[\[87726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of additional sanctions against Iran to help prevent manufacture and supply of drones used for attacks against (a) Ukraine, (b) Israel and (c) Saudi Arabia.

David Rutley:

Iran's supply of weapons, including unmanned aerial vehicles, to state and non-state actors continues to pose a serious threat to international security. Iran's provision of weapons and military support to the Houthis is in clear breach of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2216 and the supply of drones to Russia is in violation on UNSCR 2231. Reporting suggests that Iran was behind a recent UAV attack on Israeli-owned MV Pacific Zircon. We will work with partners to ensure that those responsible are held to account.

The UK has sanctioned over 300 Iranian individuals and entities for their role in weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, and terrorism, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in its entirety. On 20 October, the Government issued new sanctions targeting Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. We urge Iran to uphold their obligations under international law and cease illegal activity which is escalating the conflict in Ukraine and threatening civilian lives.

Iran: Yemen**Sir Robert Buckland:**[\[87837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment for the implications of his policies of the Iranian Government coercing former Afghan Military into fighting in Yemen.

David Rutley:

The UK continues to monitor and challenge Iran's destabilising interference in Yemen and the region. Iran's sustained material support to the Houthis has stoked the conflict and undermined UN-led peace efforts. Reports of Afghan military personnel being deployed to Yemen constitutes a further escalation by Iran. It is vital that Yemen is not used as a theatre in which to escalate conflict in the region. We continue to encourage Iran to play a constructive role in the region.

■ **Mexico: Homicide****Fleur Anderson:**[\[93671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to work with the Mexican Government and international community to reduce the murders of land and environmental rights defenders in Mexico.

David Rutley:

In June this year, the FCDO's Media Freedom Coordinator participated in a consultation panel organised by UNESCO and the Mexican Government to establish a new National Prevention and Protection System for human rights defenders, which includes land and environmental defenders and journalists. We continue to engage regularly with Mexican authorities at ministerial, official, and state level to discuss a range of human rights issues in Mexico, including the murders of land and environmental rights defenders. A bilateral UK-Mexico human rights dialogue has also been agreed which will be used to discuss these and other issues.

■ **Sierra Leone: Democracy****Neil Coyle:**[\[94775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help stabilise democracy in Sierra Leone; and what steps he is taking to ensure that UK official development assistance does not fund programmes that could restrict democratic activity.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As a close friend of Sierra Leone, the UK holds regular, frank discussions with senior government interlocutors and other key stakeholders, on good governance, the rule of law and stability, and the importance of a free, fair election in 2023. We condemn acts of political violence and we work closely with civil society organisations in Sierra Leone to champion universal human rights, including freedom of speech and expression, and to advocate for their protection by the authorities.

The Foreign Secretary spoke with the President of Sierra Leone in London on 22 November 2022 about the importance of the upcoming election and Sierra Leone's democratic process. The Minister for Development reiterated this message in a meeting with the Minister of Basic and Senior Education at the PSVI conference on 28 November. The British High Commission Freetown has recently observed the national voter registration process. The UK did not fund or provide assistance for the

Mid-Term Census and we have made our views on its limitations known to the Government of Sierra Leone. We will continue to support processes underpinning free and fair elections next year.

■ South Africa: UN Security Council

Navendu Mishra:

[\[93705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of supporting a permanent seat for the Republic of South Africa on the United Nations Security Council.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The United Kingdom has long called for the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, taking the total membership to somewhere in the mid-twenties. We support permanent African representation on the Council.

■ South Sudan: Health Services

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[93601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) state hospitals and (b) smaller health care facilities in South Sudan have been funded by his Department in each of the last five years, and what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of reductions in funding in the current financial year.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is still the largest donor to the South Sudan Health Pool Fund (HPF3), providing up to £175 million from 2018 to 2024. HPF3 supports more than 500 public health facilities across South Sudan, including 15 hospitals, and around 4,400 community health workers. In August, the FCDO, on behalf of HPF3 donors, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the South Sudanese Government, setting out how we will transition responsibility for the provision of health services at seven state hospitals and Al-Saba Children's Hospital to the South Sudanese authorities by March 2023. By sustaining our support for community health workers, we will enable continued treatment for common childhood illnesses in locations where there has been a withdrawal of HPF3 funding.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Naz Shah:

[\[95867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the number of civilians killed in the Ethiopian and Eritrean offensive in the Tigray region of Ethiopia launched on 1 September 2022.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Information on casualties from the conflict in northern Ethiopia is scarce. Since the resumption of fighting on 24 August it is likely that there have been thousands of casualties.

The UK welcomes the agreements signed between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on 2 November and 12 November. They provide for an end to two years of brutal conflict in northern Ethiopia. The UK calls upon the Eritrean Government to support the agreement by withdrawing its troops from Ethiopia.

■ **Tigray: Peace Negotiations**

Naz Shah:

[\[95866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the progress of the African Union's Peace initiative in Tigray, 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. If implemented in full, they can serve as the basis for a lasting peace. However, it will require sustained and magnanimous leadership on all sides, and support from Ethiopia's friends across the international community. The UK Government has offered its support to the Ethiopian Government and the African Union.

The cessation of hostilities is largely holding and humanitarian convoys have begun entering Tigray. As of 24 November, an estimated 118 trucks in 12 convoys had reached Tigray. However, more needs to be done by both sides to ensure implementation of the agreement is sustained, essential services are restored and aid reaches the millions of people in desperate need.

■ **Ukraine: Clothing**

Drew Hendry:

[\[96621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of (a) purchasing and (b) supporting the production of winter clothing for people in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is closely monitoring the impact of winter in Ukraine. The UK is delivering more than 25,000 sets of extreme cold weather clothing by mid-December, to help Ukrainian troops fight through the winter. Our economic and humanitarian support to Ukraine, over £1.5 billion, is responding to needs arising from cold weather and Russian attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure, including over 850 generators, £10 million to the Energy Community Ukraine support fund, and £4 million to the International Organization for Migration to provide shelter and repairs to water, sanitation and health facilities. We assess options for our support, including providing clothing, in ongoing dialogue with the Government of Ukraine, our delivery partners and other donors.

■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid**Naz Shah:** [\[95864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to co-operate with European countries to ensure that aid is being provided to Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK and European partners are working closely on providing aid to Ukraine; military equipment, cyber resilience, humanitarian and economic support and energy resilience. As part of our response, we have deployed UK humanitarian experts to Poland, Romania and Moldova. On energy, the UK has provided €54.3 million in guarantees that has unlocked a total of €97.3 million of EBRD financing the Ukrainian electricity transmission system operator, Ukrenergo. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and other Ministers are in regular contact with their European counterparts, including at UNGA, G7 and G20 meetings and at the European Political Community Summit where leaders agreed on the importance of UK-EU cooperation to support Ukraine for as long as it takes.

■ Zimbabwe: HIV Infection**Navendu Mishra:** [\[93701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing the World Health Organisation for injectable cabotegravir (CAB-LA) programmes (a) generally and (b) to support HIV/Aids treatment and prevention in Zimbabwe.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is a long-standing supporter of the World Health Organization (WHO) and one of its largest donors, with a focus on supporting WHO to reform and to address UK global health priorities including, but not limited to, achieving universal health coverage, improving global health security, and better pandemic preparedness and response. WHO has published specific guidance (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240054097>) on offering injectable cabotegravir (CAB-LA) as an HIV prevention tool, and will support partners and countries, including Zimbabwe, to include CAB-LA safely and effectively in HIV prevention programmes and advance regulatory approval.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Cancer: Nurses****Jim Shannon:** [\[92208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of specialist cancer nurses in the NHS.

Will Quince:

Health Education England is implementing the priorities identified in the cancer workforce plan phase 1 and is investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce. This includes the provision of training grants of up to £5,000 in 2022/23 for existing and aspiring cancer nurse specialists to enable them to undertake additional training to develop specialist clinical, leadership, education or research capabilities.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[89892]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to ensure an adequate number of specialist cancer staff to tackle the backlog in cancer services caused by covid-19.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: From August 2016 to August 2022, there has been an increase of over 5,700 full time equivalent staff in cancer-related professions, including histopathologists, gastroenterologists, clinical radiologists, medical and clinical oncologists, diagnostic radiographers and therapeutic radiographers. In 2022/23, NHS England and Health Education England have invested a £81 million to develop and increase the cancer and diagnostics workforce.

■ Childbirth**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[95908]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment has he made of the adequacy of the support available for parents of premature children.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: NHS England will invest an additional £127 million in maternity services. Of this, approximately £45 million will be available to hospitals over the next three years to increase the number of neonatal cots in England to ensure high quality care in the most appropriate clinical setting.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to improve access to and quality of perinatal mental health care for mothers and their partners . Mental health services in England will be expanded to include new mental health 'hubs' for mothers, including those with premature children. The 'Neonatal Critical Care Transformation Review', published in 2019, set out a vision for high quality neonatal care which will be networked across England to improve outcomes for families and provide safe expert care close to home.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Navendu Mishra:** [\[93700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support the Government is providing to (a) vulnerable and (b) immunosuppressed people to protect themselves from covid-19 in winter 2022-23.

Maria Caulfield:

The autumn COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign aims to increase immunity in those at higher risk of severe infection during winter 2022/23. The booster dose is being offered to individuals aged 50 years old and over, residents and staff in care homes for older adults, frontline health and social care workers, unpaid carers, individuals aged five to 49 years old in clinical risk groups and household contacts of those who are immunosuppressed. Those who are at higher risk from COVID-19 due to their immune system continue to have priority access to therapeutic and antiviral treatments.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** [\[92345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure hospital inpatients are able to access their covid booster vaccine during their hospital stay.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 24 November 2022]: On 6 September 2022, a letter was issued to National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts to advise that opportunities to vaccinate inpatients and those attending outpatient hospital appointments should be maximised. There are currently 230 hospital hub sites in England delivering COVID-19 booster vaccinations.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[93721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2022 to Question 88798, for what reason there are no current plans; and with what (a) organisations in the UK and (b) overseas his Department has discussed the diagnosis or treatment of post-vaccination syndrome.

Maria Caulfield:

There is a robust system of post-vaccination surveillance in place. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) continually monitors safety during widespread use of a vaccine and has a safety monitoring strategy in place for COVID-19 vaccines. As part of its surveillance, the MHRA works with United Kingdom and international public health partners to review the effectiveness and impact of vaccines.

■ Dental Services

Dean Russell:

[\[94897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on access to dental care under Our Plan for Patients.

Neil O'Brien:

On 25 November 2022, the Department introduced legislation to amend the National Health Service dental contract to incentivise dentists to deliver care to high needs patients through fairer remuneration. The legislation requires NHS dentists to update their NHS.UK profiles more frequently to ensure patients can access accurate information on the services available. The Department will enable NHS England's commissioners to more flexibly commission additional care for patients where this can be delivered by NHS dental teams.

NHS England has introduced minimum Unit of Dental Activity values of £23 to support NHS dentists with historically low value contracts and improve variation in contract values in England. The Department and NHS England aim to diversify the range of professionals available in NHS dentistry.

■ Dental Services: Children

Dean Russell:

[\[94896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the availability of NHS dental services for children.

Neil O'Brien:

We are working with NHS England to implement improvements to the National Health Service dentistry contract through measures agreed with the British Dental Association and set out in 'Our plan for patients' in September. These will improve access to NHS dentistry, including for children, whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dentists and their teams.

■ Doctors

Wes Streeting:

[\[65884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England spent on agency doctors in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 24 October 2022]: NHS England collect data on agency expenditure from the National Health Service (NHS). NHS England started collecting agency spend data from 2017/18, this is shown in the following table. 2021/22 data is not yet validated; the statutory deadline for laying audited accounts before Parliament is 31 January.

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
N/A	£949,883,470	£937,864,774	£918,617,743	£918,879,984

Spend on temporary agency doctors was 6.6% of spend on doctors in substantive roles in 2020/21.

NHS England do not incur expenditure on agency doctors themselves. They collect agency expenditure data for NHS providers and the audited information is published in the trust accounts consolidation (TAC) data files on its public website which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/financial-accounting-and-reporting/nhs-providers-tac-data-publications/>

■ Epilepsy: Children

David Warburton: [96631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to establish clinical trials to test the (a) safety and (b) efficacy of unlicensed cannabis-based products for the treatment of children with epilepsy.

David Warburton: [96632]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that research into the use of cannabis-based products for the treatment of children with epilepsy is adequately funded.

Will Quince:

The Department, via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), is developing two randomised controlled trials into epilepsy in adults and children. The trials will start in due course and results will be published once completed and peer reviewed. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including cannabis-based products for the treatment of children with epilepsy.

■ Glaucoma: Health Services

Jim Shannon: [94748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for (a) health and (b) care services of early surgical intervention to delay and slow glaucoma before sight loss becomes apparent.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. Clinicians are responsible for determining the most appropriate treatment options with individual patients.

When making treatment decisions, we expect clinicians to consider relevant the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance on the diagnosis, management and treatment of glaucoma.

■ Health Incentives Scheme

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[95808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Health Incentives Scheme pilots.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: The Better Health: Rewards pilot has not yet launched. The Department has committed to undertaking an assessment of its effectiveness when the pilot and evaluation are complete.

■ Health Services: Children

Julian Sturdy:

[\[95833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all children with additional needs are given the tailored support they need and deserve within the healthcare system.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with the Department for Education to implement the proposals within the 'SEND review: right support, right place, right time' green paper. This includes commissioning analysis on how the health needs of children and young people with special education needs and disabilities can be met through effective workforce planning.

All National Health Service organisations are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard to meet the communication needs of patients and carers with a disability, impairment or sensory loss, including children with additional needs. NHS England is currently reviewing the Accessible Information Standard to ensure it is fit for purpose and expects the updated standard and supporting documents to be published in early 2023.

NHS England is also working with NHS Digital to develop a 'digital flag' for reasonable adjustments in patient health records to ensure that NHS staff can tailor the support provided to the person's specific needs. There are different categories of adjustments, including for communication support and requirements for accessible information.

■ Health Services: Weather

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[94691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the NHS is prepared to tackle pressures during winter 2022-23 caused by (a) the flu, (b) covid-19 and (c) levels of NHS staff vacancies.

Will Quince:

The National Health Service is delivering an integrated COVID-19 booster and flu vaccination programme to increase immunity for those at higher risk from COVID-19 and flu during the winter and reduce pressure on healthcare services. In winter 2022/23, the NHS will also increase bed capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, maximise the use of virtual wards, and establish Acute Respiratory Infection hubs to support same day assessment and reduce admissions.

Health Education England has a mandated target to train 3,000 paramedic graduates nationally per annum from 2021 to 2024 to increase the domestic paramedic workforce. The NHS is maximising the recruitment of new staff in primary care, including care co-ordinators and social prescribing link workers. This is in addition to an investment of at least £1.5 billion in 2020 to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024.

Health: Disadvantaged**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[95809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a decision on the publication of the Health Disparities White Paper.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: No decisions have yet been taken.

Healthy Start Scheme**Gareth Thomas:**[\[69488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many beneficiaries who were previously receiving Healthy Start paper vouchers have not yet re-enrolled via the new online registration system.

Neil O'Brien:

The NHS Business Services Authority estimate that as of 13 November 2022 there were 38,089 households which previously were in receipt of paper vouchers which have not successfully applied to the NHS Healthy Start prepaid card scheme. At the same date there were 131,658 households on the prepaid card scheme which were not previously in receipt of paper vouchers.

As of March 2022, uptake of the Healthy Start scheme was estimated to be 72%, higher than the 55% uptake in March 2021.

Hormone Pregnancy Tests Expert Working Group**Tony Lloyd:**[\[94686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish the findings of the Expert Working Group review on Hormone Pregnancy Tests.

Maria Caulfield:

The 'Report of the Commission on Human Medicines' Expert Working Group on Hormone Pregnancy Tests' was published on 15 November 2017 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-commission-on-human-medicines-expert-working-group-on-hormone-pregnancy-tests>

Hospitals: Construction**Feryal Clark:****[93707]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the New Hospitals Programme will support the adoption of innovative treatment platforms that require infrastructure investment.

Will Quince:

The New Hospital Programme will enhance treatment and care facilities and replace outdated infrastructure. It will utilise the technology to optimise clinical and physical designs to improve patient outcomes and experience and the working environment for staff.

We are ensuring that new hospitals are versatile, flexible and adaptable to respond to advances in medicine and emerging innovative treatment platforms. This includes implementing digitally enabled, intelligent new hospitals which allow for continuous improvement in healthcare and modernisation of services. We are reviewing new and emerging detection, diagnosis and treatment options and increasing the capacity of single rooms for patients to improve patients' experience and reduce the risk of infection. This is informing layout plans to ensure equipment is effectively placed to improve patient outcomes, such as specialist imaging equipment adjacent to or within operating theatres.

Influenza: Vaccination**Wes Streeting:****[84922]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has met with NHS England to discuss concerns over inappropriate administration of QIVe flu vaccine to patients aged 65 years or older in the South East region.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: We have regular discussions with NHS England on a range of issues, including vaccination. NHS England has identified a very small number of patients 65 years old and over who have not received the recommended flu vaccine for this age group. NHS England has written to providers to reiterate the recommended vaccines to use for each cohort. Local National Health Service teams are working with those providers where this has occurred to determine if it is appropriate to invite those affected to receive a further dose.

While the information requested is not currently held centrally, NHS regional teams are working with providers to collate further details.

■ Integrated Care Boards

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[94676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure cohesion in policy making between Integrated Care Boards, including on access to (a) drugs and (b) treatment.

Helen Whately:

NHS England determines overall policy and strategy for integrated care boards (ICBs), including access to medication and treatments. ICBs are responsible for commissioning and ensuring the healthcare needs of local communities are met. Providers are required to ensure statutory responsibilities are met for the delivery of safe, effective, efficient, high quality services.

■ Locums: Costs

Anthony Browne:

[\[77627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the potential additional annual cost to the public purse of using locum rather than directly employed doctors in the NHS.

Will Quince:

In 2020/21, expenditure on agency doctors was £918,879,984 or 6.6% of the substantive spending on doctors that year. Maximum hourly rates for agency staff are governed by NHS England's price cap which is calculated at 55% above substantive rates. For agency medical consultants, this is £80.61 or £107.47 for unsocial hours, defined as those outside of 7am to 7pm, Monday to Friday and bank holidays. Exceptions exist, including for circumstances concerning patient safety. The suitable rates for extra-contractual working hours are agreed locally. The agency rates include worker pay, holiday pay, National Insurance and pension contributions and an agency fee.

For doctors employed on nationally agreed terms and conditions, the highest hourly pay is for a medical consultant. The hourly basic pay rate based on 40 hours per week for a consultant at the maximum of the pay scale is £57.12 per hour. This does not include enhancements for working unsocial hours or National Insurance and pension contributions. Locum medical staff provide a flexible resource when demand is high or during times of sickness or other absences. We are reducing the cost of flexible staffing through price caps, procurement frameworks, expenditure ceilings and working with National Health Service trusts to develop staff banks.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

John McDonnell:

[\[94672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the concerns raised in the letter sent on 7 November 2022 by Dr Nicola Byrne, National Data Guardian, and Dr Arjun Dhillon, chair of the UK Caldicott Guardian Council to integrated care board

senior information risk owners, whether he is taking steps to assess the confidentiality of patients' data in response to those concerns.

Will Quince:

'Data saves lives: reshaping health and social care with data' sets out the importance of transparency in maintaining trust in the use of personal information in the health and care system. NHS England supports integrated care boards with advice on identifying the appropriate legal basis for using confidential patient information for purposes beyond individual care, including ensuring that the correct approvals are sought where relevant.

■ **Menopause: Mental Health Services**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[95807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of mental health support available to women experiencing menopause symptoms.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: No specific assessment has been made. However, the NHS Long Term Plan commits an additional £2.3 billion a year for mental health services in England by 2023/24 to allow an additional two million people to receive National Health Service-funded mental health support, including women experiencing menopause symptoms.

Women concerned about their mental health due to the menopause should seek advice from their general practitioner and can also self-refer to NHS Improving Access Psychological Therapies services, which assist with common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidelines recommend that hormone replacement therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy are appropriate treatments which should be considered to alleviate low mood and anxiety.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[94862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage local councils to utilise approved mental health supported placement providers to alleviate the pressure on hospitals.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: We are providing £500 million through the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to support measures which can ease patient flow in hospitals, including addressing the length of stay and delayed discharges from mental health inpatient settings. However, local areas are responsible for determining this funding should be allocated based on local circumstances.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are supporting individuals to stay well in their communities and reduce demand on inpatient services. The Plan has committed

approximately £1 billion for community mental health services by 2023/24 to increase access to high quality, timely care for those with severe mental illness.

■ Mental Illness: Drugs

Andy Carter: [\[95952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of mental health spending on drugs trials takes place in the North West of England.

Will Quince:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Since 2018, the NIHR has invested approximately £41 million through research programmes on pharmaceutical trials in mental health. Of this, £836,772 has been awarded to organisations in the North West of England. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including mental health. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. It is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions.

■ NHS: Databases

Marco Longhi: [\[94883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Federated Data Platform will maintain patient confidentiality.

Will Quince:

To ensure that the Federated Data Platform (FDP) complies with data protection principles and associated legislation and maintains patient confidentiality, NHS England has developed an initial Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for the procurement of the FDP. An overarching DPIA will be undertaken to articulate the data security and protection principles and lawful bases for deployment. Purpose-specific DPIA's will be drafted for each use case, which will receive formal approval within NHS England prior to deployment. A legal mechanism for sharing and processing data will be agreed in consultation with NHS England and legal counsel.

This will be concurrent and aligned with the procurement process to ensure data protection by design and default principles are embedded. This will ensure that a lawful basis for data sharing is identified and the common law duty of confidentiality is adhered to for all use cases. The FDP team is also consulting on this process with information governance leads in the sector and privacy campaigners.

Marco Longhi: [\[94885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the plans announced by the NHS to move to using Secure Data Environments to access NHS health and social care data, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure public confidence in that process.

Will Quince:

In 'Data saves lives: reshaping health and social care with data', the Department committed to increase public confidence in the use of data in the health and social care system. This includes a national programme of engagement and the development of a data 'pact' to outline how health and social care data will be used and address the public's expectations.

We committed to engage with the public and professionals on high priority or complex topics, such as the delivery of Secure Data Environments. In summer 2022 we engaged patient and public panels to develop non-technical resources to explain the Secure Data Environment policy. In addition, in September 2022, we published policy guidelines on how we expect Secure Data Environments to function. Guideline 6 set out the expectation that Secure Data Environments must ensure that patients and the public are appropriately involved in ongoing decisions on how their data is used.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing**Angela Rayner:**[\[86501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2022 to Question 61151 on Protective Clothing: Storage, what the average (a) daily, (b) weekly and (c) monthly cost has been of the storage of that personal protective equipment in the latest period for which data is available.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 November 2022]: Estimates of demand for essential personal protective equipment (PPE) relied on reasonable worst-case scenario planning, information on the prevailing infection prevention control guidance and the likely number of patient interactions in healthcare settings. This required the Government to purchase significant amounts of PPE in a short period of time.

From April to September 2022, the average monthly cost for storage of personal protective equipment in China is £3.2 million. Based on the monthly average, it is estimated that the average weekly cost of storage in China is £740,000 and the average daily cost is £106,000. We are currently reducing the excess stock, including the cost of storing PPE in China and further information will be available in due course.

Wes Streeting:[\[95882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many FTE government-employed lawyers have worked on PPE contracts since May 2020.

Will Quince:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Pancreatic Cancer

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[89895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to help improve survival rates for pancreatic cancer.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service is implementing non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways for patients presenting with vague and non-site specific symptoms which do not clearly align to a tumour type, which can include pancreatic cancer. There are currently 96 NSS pathways in England which will support the NHS to meet the Faster Diagnosis Standard that all patients referred for the investigation of suspected cancer receive an outcome within 28 days.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published a guideline on the diagnosis and management of pancreatic cancer in 2018 that aims to improve care by ensuring quicker and more accurate diagnosis and identifying the most effective treatments. Healthcare professionals are expected to take NICE guidelines fully into account in the care and treatment of their patients.

A new pancreatic cancer clinical audit was announced in May 2021. The aims of this audit will be to provide regular and timely evidence to cancer services of where patterns of care in England and Wales may vary, to support NHS services to increase the consistency of access to treatments and help guide quality improvement initiatives, and to stimulate improvements in cancer detection, treatment, and outcomes for patients, including survival rates.

The Royal College of Surgeons has been selected to deliver the pancreatic cancer audit, along with 5 others. All five audits will cover care delivered in England and Wales and will see an investment of around £5.4 million for an initial period of three years.

■ Pneumococcal Diseases: Vaccination

Jim Shannon:

[94750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure high levels of uptake of pneumococcal vaccinations ahead of winter 2022-23.

Maria Caulfield:

As the pneumococcal programmes are not seasonal, General practitioners contact patients throughout the year as they reach the eligible age. For the adult programme, this applies to those aged 65 year old and over and in the childhood programme, this applies to children aged 12 weeks, one year old and clinical risk groups at two years old and over.

■ Postural Tachycardia Syndrome: Research

Simon Lightwood:

[\[95989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to commission research into postural tachycardia syndrome; and whether he plans to take steps to commission further research into postural tachycardia syndrome.

Will Quince:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Since 2018, the NIHR has not funded specific research into postural tachycardia syndrome. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made based on the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. It is not usual practice for the NIHR to ring-fence a proportion of its budget for research into particular conditions and there are no current plans to commission specific research for postural tachycardia syndrome.

■ Pregnancy Tests

Tony Lloyd:

[\[94687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing redress for victims of Hormone Pregnancy Tests.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review did not accept the recommendation relating to redress, including for hormone pregnancy tests. We are prioritising improving the future safety of medicines and medical devices through high standards for industry to market and manufacture products.

Tony Lloyd:

[\[94688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent reassessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review for victims of hormone pregnancy tests.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government published its response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety review in July 2021. We will provide an update on progress on implementing the response in due course.

■ Prescriptions

Daisy Cooper:

[\[95937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many prescriptions have been issued but not collected in each month of 2022 by commissioning area.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Respiratory System: Diseases**

Geraint Davies:

[\[93415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the NHS is equipped to provide care to patients with respiratory illnesses during winter 2022-23.

Geraint Davies:

[\[93416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that there are sufficient hospital beds for patients admitted with respiratory illnesses during winter 2022-23.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: The '2022/23 priorities and operational planning guidance' asks systems to increase capacity by implementing virtual wards to provide an alternative to hospital admission and to focus on two cohorts, including acute respiratory infection.

NHS England's 'Combined adult and paediatric Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) hubs' sets out the provision of specialised care in the community for respiratory illnesses through respiratory hubs and virtual wards. In addition, systems have been asked to develop plans for additional bed capacity to mitigate projected demand.

■ **Stevens-Johnson Syndrome**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[96551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of Stevens-Johnson Syndrome were diagnosed by the NHS in England in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021; whether any of these cases were linked to covid-19 vaccines; and what information her Department has provided to the public about whether people affected by Stevens-Johnson Syndrome should receive covid-19 booster vaccines.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ **Strokes: Ambulance Services**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of placing skilled and specialist medical staff on ambulance calls to assess patients who have suffered from strokes prior to them arriving at a local hospital or comprehensive stroke unit.

Will Quince:

NHS England is funding areas in England to implement pre-hospital video triage for people with a suspected stroke. Patients will receive a video consultation from their

home or onboard an ambulance with a hospital-based stroke clinician, who will advise the paramedics on the appropriate treatment for the patient, such as thrombectomy or to which hospital they should be conveyed.

■ **Surgery: Cumbria**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[92382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to work with NHS bodies in Cumbria to reduce surgery waiting times.

Will Quince:

North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust has successfully applied for funding from the Department's Targeted Investment Fund to reduce waiting lists and increase capacity. The Trust has eliminated waiting times in excess of 104 weeks, is on schedule to remove waiting times of 78 weeks and reduce those waiting more than 52 weeks.

■ **Tobacco: Sales**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[94825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) increasing the age of sale for tobacco products in the UK and (b) providing more funding for services that help people quit smoking.

Neil O'Brien:

No formal assessment has been made. However, we are considering the recommendations made in 'The Khan review: making smoking obsolete', including the potential merits of raising the age of sale of tobacco products and additional funding for stop smoking services.

■ **Vaccination**

Jim Shannon:

[\[94751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to apply the experience of the covid-19 vaccination programme to help increase the uptake of other adult vaccines.

Maria Caulfield:

We are gathering the lessons learned from the COVID-19 vaccine programme to strengthen the delivery of and increase uptake for all vaccination programmes. NHS England is considering a future strategy for the delivery of vaccinations and is engaging with providers of vaccination services, the public and other stakeholders.

■ Veterans: Disability Aids**Clive Efford:** [\[95764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support ex-service personnel who require (a) specialised wheelchairs or (b) other mobility aids but are not supplied or supported by statutory means.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service in England has a statutory responsibility to provide care and treatment for veterans' mobility requirements. A range of equipment is available, following an assessment of clinical need. Bespoke NHS support for veterans is also available, such as personal wheelchair budgets. In addition, the Health Innovation Fund was launched in July 2022 to support organisations to research and trial technology which could assist veterans with complex healthcare needs.

■ Veterans: Hearing Impairment**Clive Efford:** [\[95765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the closure of the Veterans Hearing Fund on (a) veterans and (b) veterans' charities.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. However, we are working with NHS England to ensure that provision and support remains for previous users of the Fund. Veterans can be referred to National Health Service audiologists to access any clinically required equipment.

■ Visual Impairment: Health Services**Jim Shannon:** [\[94746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he makes of the average lifetime cost to the NHS of a patient who loses their sight.

Jim Shannon: [\[94747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the average lifetime care costs of a patient who loses their sight.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Working Hours: Health**Peter Dowd:** [\[94782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to provide funding for research into the health effects of night shift working.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including the health effects of night shift working. However, it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of value for money, scientific quality, and the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum****Seema Malhotra:****[93550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of asylum seekers in (a) England, (b) Greater London and (c) Hounslow.

Robert Jenrick:

Statistics relating to supported asylum seekers temporarily residing in contingency accommodation are published as Immigration Statistics under the S98 population tables. The latest publication (March 2022) can be found here [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets), under the document [Asylum seekers in receipt of support \(second edition\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#). The data published at the end of June have been recently removed and are being investigated. An update will be provided in the next Immigration Statistics release.

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

■ Asylum: Sefton**Peter Dowd:****[95855]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to relocate asylum seekers to Sefton Borough.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is currently not looking to relocate asylum seekers to Sefton Borough at this present time. However, the unprecedented number of illegal Channel crossings have placed our immigration system under immense strain and our accommodation providers continue to consider contingency accommodation in all areas.

■ Asylum: Social Security Benefits

Dan Carden:

[\[93612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to raise the level of the asylum support allowance to support people seeking asylum from the impact of the cost of living crisis and rising inflation.

Robert Jenrick:

The level of allowance is reviewed annually to ensure it meets the sufficient living needs of asylum seekers. We are undertaking this year's asylum support review and will announce the outcome through amendments to the Asylum Support Regulations 2000.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Paula Barker:

[\[94906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what asylum accommodation placements were procured from 23 September 2022 to 23 November 2022, broken down by local authority area.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office and its accommodation providers are working closely with Local Authorities across the UK to secure the additional accommodation required to meet our statutory duties toward asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Since 13 April 2022, all Local Authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales are expected to participate in a new system of full dispersal accommodation. This Full Dispersal model, announced on 13 April 2022 is supported by £21million of grant funding to ensure eligible [Local Authorities](#) can provide wraparound support locally. Local authorities will also receive £3,500 for each new dispersal accommodation bed space in the 22/23 financial year.

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.

■ Chief Fire Officers

Stephen Morgan:

[\[93621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of allowing Chief Fire Officers to (a) amend terms and conditions of employment of and (b) have increased powers to choose the (i) training and (ii) equipment for their teams.

Chris Philp:

In our recent Fire Reform White Paper (May 2022) we confirmed our intention to legislate to give Chief Fire Officers' operational independence, in line with

recommendations from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

We also sought input from the fire leaders on how to deliver this goal.

■ **China: Intelligence Services**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[92131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November 2022 to Question 77322 on China: Intelligence Services, what estimate her Department has made of the (a) number of undeclared police stations in the UK and (b) support offered to them by the Chinese Government.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: As I said to the House in my statement on 1 November, reports of undeclared 'police stations' in the UK are of course very concerning and are taken extremely seriously. Any foreign country operating on UK soil must abide by UK law.

Home Office officials are in regular contact with the police. They are investigating allegations of unlawful activity. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further on operational matters.

As I said to the House on 1 November, I will provide an update on the work relating to transnational repression in due course.

■ **Community Policing**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help create high quality policing teams that build strong relationships with the local communities they serve.

Chris Philp:

It is an operational matter for the Chief Constables of each police force to consider how best to meet the needs of, and engage with, local communities, based on their local knowledge and expertise. Police and Crime Commissioners also have a responsibility, as outlined in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, to hold Chief Constables to account for how they engage with local communities and deliver on the local police and crime plan.

The 20,000 police officer uplift is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to support all forces become more representative of the communities they serve.

As at 30 September 2022, 15,343 additional officers have been recruited across England and Wales, 77% of the target of 20,000 additional officers by March 2023. Since April 2020, more than four in ten new recruits (42.5%) were female and for the first time there are now over 50,000 female police officers in England and Wales. Over the same period 11.4% of recruits (who stated their ethnicity) identified as

ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) an increase on 10.3% in the year to March 2019.

■ Community Policing: Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment has she made of the impact of community mental health staff shortages on community policing capability.

Chris Philp:

Impacts on community policing capability is an operational matter for individual police forces and is not held centrally by the Home Office.

The best place for people suffering a mental health crisis is a healthcare setting as the police cannot provide the specialist medical care needed. People in crisis need the right support from the right agency and ensuring that appropriate health and social services are available to respond to those in crisis is essential.

Work is underway to better understand the precise scope and nature of mental health demand on the police and to distinguish where they may need to continue to engage and where other services need to play a bigger role.

■ Counter-terrorism: Public Places

Priti Patel:

[\[93523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress the Government has made on the introduction of the Protect Duty; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

The first duty of the Government is to protect the public, and we are committed to improving the security of public places, to ensure the public can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

The commitment made to the 'Protect Duty' in the Queen's Speech and the 2019 manifesto remains, and we are working hard to bring forward this important piece of legislation as soon as possible.

■ Criminal Investigation: Drugs

Stephen Morgan:

[\[93620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of police (a) powers and (b) resources for investigating the potential use of (i) GHB and (ii) other drugs in cases of sudden unexpected death.

Chris Philp:

Police Forces are funded to enable them to tackle crime. How powers are used, and the deployment of resources, including the deployment of resources on toxicology testing, is for individual forces and Police and Crime Commissioners to determine.

In relation to GHB specifically, in 2020 the government commissioned the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (the ACMD), an independent scientific advisory body, to conduct an updated harms assessment of Gamma-Hydroxybutyric Acid (GHB) and related substances. Following the ACMD advice, the Government reclassified GHB and the related substances Gamma-Butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4-Butanediol (1,4-BD), from Class C to B under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, in April 2022.

■ Detention Centres

Priti Patel:

[\[93524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made on the introduction of asylum reception centres proposed in the New Plan for Immigration.

Robert Jenrick:

Government is steadfastly committed to tackling illegal migration and stopping dangerous small boat crossings. The broken asylum system is costing UK taxpayers over £1.5 billion a year. We continue to develop proposals for asylum accommodation centres which will help reduce our reliance on the use of hotels.

■ Disclosure and Barring Service

Paul Blomfield:

[\[93517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to support people who are unable to access the DBS Update Service for the purposes of their employment.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Due to IT capabilities related to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) ability to process Police National Computer (PNC) information, there are a very small percentage of standard and enhanced checks that currently cannot be fully automated on the DBS system (approximately 0.5% of the 4.5 million standard and enhanced checks expected to be issued this year). In these instances, it is necessary for DBS to produce manual certificates which cannot be linked to the Update Service. Manual certificates are legitimate and valid certificates and should be accepted by organisations in exactly the same way as automated certificates.

The DBS is working on a full technical solution to this issue as a priority and expects it to be implemented by October 2023. This solution will ensure that DBS does not have to rely on manual certificates in the future and will enable the small percentage of individuals that are currently affected by this issue to obtain system-generated certificates and access the Update Service.

The DBS recognises that affected individuals unable to utilise the Update Service may be financially disadvantaged. To mitigate this impact, DBS is providing redress upon request for those individuals' second and subsequent DBS application fees to put them back into a broadly equal financial position to those who can subscribe to the Update Service.

■ Immigration: Applications

Dr Rupa Huq: [94823]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce waiting times for immigration decisions.

Dr Rupa Huq: [94824]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) financial and (b) personal impacts of delayed immigration decisions on people awaiting a decision.

Robert Jenrick:

UKVI has faced extremely high pressures over the past two years. All visa routes have seen extremely high demand following the end of the pandemic and the easing of travel restrictions.

UKVI is working hard to reduce processing times and is now back within service standard across a number of our visa routes. UKVI is working hard to speed up decision making by rolling out more efficient technology, including digital interviewing, moving away from a paper-based system, and recruiting more decision-making staff. UKVI have updated guidance on expected waiting times so that customers have a realistic indication of how long their applications will take to be processed. We encourage customers to continue to refer to these updates as our processing times change on a regular basis. The link to this guidance for in country applications is: [Visa decision waiting times: applications inside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-inside-the-uk) and out of country applications is: [Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk).

■ Members: Correspondence

John Penrose: [93488]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 9 September 2022 and 18 October 2022 on behalf of his constituent Luz Estela Hesketh about her British citizenship ceremony.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 23 November 2022.

■ Police Custody: Vulnerable Adults

Janet Daby: [94854]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statistics published by her Department entitled Police Powers and Procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of the proportion of black and black British children strip searched in (a) London region and (b) England and Wales.

Janet Daby:

[\[94855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce a legal requirement for vulnerable adults to have an Appropriate Adult present when detained in police custody.

Janet Daby:

[\[94857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria the police use to determine whether an adult in police custody is classified as vulnerable.

Chris Philp:

The collection and publication of data on police custody will bring additional transparency and accountability to custody in England and Wales and help us better understand how and why police powers and procedures are used within the custody process. The Home Office only received data from a subset of forces so the findings should be interpreted with caution as it is partial and not representative of the national picture. We will work with police forces and the NPCC to improve data quality in the future and use the data published on 17 November to inform conversations with the police and other stakeholders to promote wider policy development.

The police custody data collection became mandatory for 2022/23. From April 2023, Home Office will request data from forces and then assess the quality of the data which will help inform future decisions made by the Policing Data Requirement Group (PDRG) as to whether the collection remains mandatory. All data collections are reviewed each year by the PDRG to ensure that data requested from the police is proportionate to the need for the data and that forces have the technical capabilities to provide the data requested.

There is a formal definition of vulnerability which police officers are expected to use to determine vulnerability of adults in police custody. It is set out in paragraph 1.13 (d) of Code C to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Custody officers should therefore carry out vulnerability assessments of everyone in custody in line with this definition.

Section 3.15 of PACE Code C requires the custody officer to secure an appropriate adult for any vulnerable adult detained in police custody.

Strip search is an important policing tool that can help the police recover concealed drugs, weapons or other items which may cause harm to themselves or the person being searched. Strip search is one of the most intrusive powers available to the police and its use must be fair, respectful and without unlawful discrimination. No one should be strip searched based on any protected characteristics including race, sex, and age. Any use of strip search should be carried out in accordance with the law and with full regard for the welfare and dignity of the individual being searched, particularly if that individual is a child.

■ Police: Night-time Economy

Rachael Maskell: [\[93584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of hospitality venues serving alcohol on a high street on trends in the level of safety on those streets.

Rachael Maskell: [\[93585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the level of demand placed on police forces created by city centres with a high volume of night time economy venues.

Rachael Maskell: [\[93586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure that areas with a significant night time economy have adequate levels of policing.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to reducing alcohol-related crime. We are focused on establishing effective partnerships between the police, local authorities, local partnership schemes and businesses to take effective action against alcohol-related crime and harms in the night time economy.

Consideration of the possible impact on local levels of crime of a high density of shops selling alcohol is a matter for local licensing authorities. Under section 76 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the police and councils have the power to issue a closure notice if there are grounds to believe that the use of a particular premises has resulted or is likely to result in nuisance to members of the public or disorder near the premises.

The Licensing Act includes several powers that a Local Authority may use to manage the night time economy. For example, a licensing authority may complete a cumulative impact assessment to help it to limit licences granted in areas where there is evidence to show that the number or density of licensed premises in the area may be contributing to problems that are undermining licensing objectives.

There is also the option to consult on introducing a late night levy - this is an optional power used at the discretion of the local authority, to collect a financial contribution from businesses that profit from selling alcohol late at night, with the funds raised to be used for late night policing and other costs associated with the night time economy.

■ Police: Recruitment

Rachael Maskell: [\[93587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of her Department's programmes to recruit (a) police and (b) community support officers on trends in the level of urban crime.

Chris Philp:

The Police Uplift Programme recruitment is still ongoing and will continue through to March 2023. While many new officers have been recruited already, it will take time for them to complete their training and reach full operational effectiveness.

Evaluation work will take place to understand the impact of the programme and the extent to which it is achieving its aims.

Police: Stun Guns**Janet Daby:**[\[93640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the use of police tasers on children.

Chris Philp:

The Government is clear that all police use of force must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary in all circumstances.

All police officers are comprehensively trained in assessing the potential vulnerabilities of a person, including their age and size when they take the difficult decision to use force which is necessary to achieve a lawful objective.

Refugees: Afghanistan**Caroline Lucas:**[\[93496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 86447 on Refugees: Afghanistan, whether the notifications to eligible individuals with advice on the next steps include the offer of (a) one of the 1500 places and (b) places for eligible family members.

Robert Jenrick:

ACRS pathway 3 is intended to offer a route to safety for those in Afghanistan and the region. This pathway is FCDO led for the first year.

Those who are eligible and are referred for resettlement under the ACRS Pathway 3 will be informed by email from the FCDO with advice on the next steps

Under Pathway 3 we will offer resettlement places to up to 1,500 people from the three identified cohorts. This includes the principal and their eligible family members.

Sleeping Rough: Prosecutions**Paula Barker:**[\[94908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many rough sleepers were charged under the Vagrancy Act 1824 between 11 May 2010 and 23 November 2022.

Paula Barker:[\[94909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many individuals have been charged in relation to offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824 between 1 January and 23 November 2022.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not held by the Home Office.

The Ministry of Justice publish information on the outcomes of prosecutions by offence, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2022>

Violent and Sex Offender Register**Sarah Champion:****[94759]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how sex offenders have breached their notification requirements in the past year.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Public protection is a priority for this Government and the notification requirements for registered sex offenders are an invaluable tool to help the police manage risk. Breach of the requirements is a criminal offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.

The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Annual Report 2020/21 shows that in the year to March 2022, 1,641 offenders subject to notification requirements were cautioned or convicted for breaches.

The UK has some of the toughest powers in the world to deal with sex offenders and those who pose a risk of sexual harm, and we are committed to ensuring that the system is as robust as it can be.

We want to ensure our system is as robust as it can be, which is why we have strengthened the regime through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, and in March, the then Home Secretary appointed former Chief Constable Mick Creedon to carry out an independent review into the police management of registered sex offenders. The review has delivered recommendations to the Government on what could be done across the policing and law enforcement landscape to enhance the management of registered sex offenders in the community in England and Wales.

Visas: Care Workers and Health Professions**Catherine West:****[95887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason it takes 16 weeks on average to receive a decision on Health and Care Workers visas; and what steps she is taking to reduce this amount of time.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine Visa Scheme applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has impacted on the delivery of some of our service standards.

We remain focussed on the processing of Entry Clearance applications for Health & Care Workers, to assist them in entering the UK to take up employment in the Health and Care sector, and these are being decided within our published service standards. We have injected additional resource into the team and expect the time taken to assess Health and Care Worker in-country applications to reduce significantly.

Details on visa processing times are published on the Home Office website at: [Visa decision waiting times - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times) These are updated on a regular basis to inform customers of any changes that may affect their application.

■ Wind Power: Migrant Workers

Kenny MacAskill:

[96654]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2022 to Question 89909 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, which Department is responsible for (a) the enforcement of and (b) assessing the impact on employment law of the Offshore Wind Workers Immigration Rules Concession 2017.

Robert Jenrick:

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and its agencies are responsible for the enforcement of employment law.

BEIS are responsible for evaluating the impact of employment law on all sections of society including migrant workers. The Home Office is responsible for evaluating the impact of immigration concessions.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Exports: Austria

Gareth Thomas:

[92072]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if her Department will make an estimate of the potential economic impact of the requirement for companies exporting to Austria to register with a local authority for a fee on those companies; and if she will make a statement.

Andrew Bowie:

The Austrian requirement is for applicants for public procurements to register with a local authority before submitting tender documents. This is not a general requirement for all companies exporting to Austria. While we have not estimated the potential economic impact of the specific issue raised, estimates for a selection of barriers where Government action is being taken are included in the published "Aggregate valuation estimates for market access barriers".

■ Small Businesses: Trade Promotion

Dame Meg Hillier:

[\[902479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to help support small businesses that are not eligible to participate in the UK Tradeshow Programme to develop commercial relationships.

Andrew Bowie:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: Our Export Strategy has a range of measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to increase their exports. It includes initiatives such as the Export Champions, which facilitates peer-to-peer learning between businesses, allowing them to learn through exporting success stories and build business networks.

Our UK-wide Export Academy delivers webinars and events to build the exporting capabilities of small businesses, while also centrally coordinating the Department for International Trade's capability building activities, including building effective networks and in 2021/22 UK Export Finance provided £7.4bn in support for UK exports, directly supporting 545 UK businesses, of which 81% were SMEs.

■ UK Trade with EU: Trade Barriers

Gareth Thomas:

[\[89689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made a recent assessment what trade barriers there are for businesses trading with the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

This Government is working to break down trade barriers around the world, and that includes with the EU, where we are implementing our high-quality, zero quota and zero tariff Trade and Cooperation Agreement. A recent assessment of trade barriers is published in 'Official Statistics: Market Access Barrier Statistics: financial year 2021-22', where they are broken down by geographic regions, including Europe. In the year to March 2022, 47 market access barriers were resolved in Europe, an 11.9% increase year on year.

JUSTICE

■ Gender Recognition: Convictions

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[96652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 11 July 2022 to Question 31897 on Gender Recognition: Convictions, how many people were prosecuted for an offence under section 22 of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 in each year since 2016.

Edward Argar:

The number of offenders prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced, on an all offence basis, for offences under S22 Gender Recognition Act 2004 was zero in England and Wales, from 2016 to June 2022.

Legal Aid Scheme: Civil Proceedings**Afzal Khan:**[\[96645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid offices are starting less than or equal to 30 cases each year, in each (a) local authority and (b) area of law in (i) 2020-21, (ii) 2021-22 and (iii) 2022-23.

Mike Freer:

The requested information can be found in the attachment.

Data for 2022/23 is a year-to-date figure reflective of the work reported between April 2022 to October 2022, inclusive. Please note that the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) commissions and monitors legal aid services by 'Procurement Area' or 'Access Point' rather than by local authority. Procurement areas differ for different categories of law.

The LAA frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision of legal aid, in all categories of law, throughout England and Wales. The LAA moves quickly, where issues arise, to secure additional provision and to ensure demand for legal aid services is met across the country. The LAA contracts with a range of legal aid providers of varying size and capacity to take on new cases. Additionally, legal advice on a range of civil matters including housing, debt, discrimination and education is available, wherever people are, through the Civil Legal Advice telephone service.

Demand for legal aid services may vary across different categories of law. In particular, there may be low demand for services in categories such as clinical negligence or welfare benefits where the scope of services funded through legal aid was reduced under the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

In early 2023 the LAA will be opening up a tender for new entrants who want to bid for a 2018 civil legal aid contract in all categories.

Attachments:

1. Table [2022-11-30 96645 Table.xlsx]

Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights**Steve Reed:**[\[96609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2022 to Question 73001 on Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights, on what date and time the flight arrived at its intended destination.

Mike Freer:

There was an outbound and a return flight on 14 March 2022. The outbound flight arrived at approximately 10.00 local time. The return flight arrived at approximately 1800 UK time.

Steve Reed:[\[96610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2022 to Question 73001 on Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights, whether (a) food and (b) alcohol were provided on the flight.

Mike Freer:

Light refreshments were provided. No alcohol was served.

Steve Reed:[\[96611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2022 to Question 73001 on Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights, who was on the flight.

Steve Reed:[\[96612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2022 to Question 73001 on Ministry of Justice: Charter Flights, whether the flight was boarded by any person who was not a (a) Minister, (b) flight attendant, (c) pilot and (d) member of departmental staff.

Mike Freer:

The Deputy Prime Minister was accompanied on the flight by officials and Special Advisers, totalling nine people.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Sick Leave****Steve Reed:**[\[94762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff in his Department took time off work due to (a) poor mental health, (b) stress and (c) anxiety in the period between (i) September 2019 and September 2020, (ii) September 2020 and September 2021 and (iii) September 2021 and September 2022.

Damian Hinds:

Number of Ministry of Justice and executive agency payroll staff¹ who recorded sick leave for 'Mental Health' reasons² - for the 12 months to September 2020, 2021 and 2022

	2020	2021	2022 ^(P)
Anxiety and Depression	2,972	3,331	3,851
Stress	2,869	3,216	3,951
Mental Health - Other	930	1,289	1,840

Notes

1. Data covers employees in His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, Legal Aid Agency, Office of the Public Guardian, Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and Ministry of Justice Head Quarters.
2. Each member of staff is recorded once per sick reason - even if they took more than one period of absence for the selected reason. A person may appear in more than one sick reason category.
3. Absences are categorised according to International Classification of Diseases, which is an approach used across the civil service.
4. MoJ and executive agency payroll staff headcount for 30 September 2020, 2021 and 2022

SEP-20	77,383
Sep-21	87,233
Sep-22	88,713

(p) Figures relating to current financial year are provisional and may be subject to change.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave

Steve Reed: [\[94770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate has he made of the cost to the public purse of (a) prison and (b) probation staff absence due to (i) stress at work and (ii) other mental health related factors in the last three years.

Steve Reed: [\[96613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2022 to Question 87949 on Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of working days that were lost due to work-related stress in (a) HM Prison Service and (b) the Probation Service in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition

Kenny MacAskill: [\[96653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the HM Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report 2021-2022, published on 24 November, how many of the transgender prisoners held in England and Wales were (a) convicted of (i) a

sexual offence and (ii) rape and serious sexual offences and (b) registered at birth as (i) male) and (ii) female).

Damian Hinds:

On question (a), please find the information in the attached data table, noting that this does not cover transgender prisoners with a gender recognition certificate. On question (b), this information is available in the HMPPS Offender Equalities Annual Report 2021-2022.

We are not obliged to allocate transgender prisoners according to their wishes, and we are strengthening our policy on transgender prisoners so that transgender women who have committed sexual offences cannot be held in the general women's estate, subject to an exemption policy for truly exceptional cases. This policy will come into effect before the end of the year, and until then our current policy is that transgender women cannot be held in the women's estate unless they have been through a robust risk assessment, which considers offending history.

Attachments:

1. PQ96653_table [2022-11-30 96653 table.xlsx]

■ **Terminal Illnesses: Children**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[96552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will review the legal safeguards needed before permission can be granted by the courts to withdraw life-sustaining treatment for children; and if he will meet Christian Concern to discuss that organisation's proposals for legal reform.

Mike Freer:

Whenever the court is required to make difficult decisions involving the care of a child, it must consider the facts and individual circumstances of each case and, based on that, determine what is in the best interests of the child concerned.

The Children Act 1989 provides the legislative framework and makes a child's welfare paramount. In addition to this principle, there is relevant clinical guidance which health professionals rely upon to make their recommendations.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **European Regional Development Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[93487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to your response to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 83567 on European Regional Development Fund: Brexit, what did the UK spend on UK Shared Prosperity Fund in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022; and what was the EU spend on the European Regional Development Fund in (a) 2019, (b) 2018, (c) 2017, (d) 2016 and (e) 2015.

Dehenna Davison:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was launched in April 2022, there was no spend in 2020 or 2021. Funding for 2022/23 is £400 million as set out in section 3.1 of the [UKSPF Prospectus](#).

The annual EU Funding available for each of the UK's European Regional Development Fund Programmes is set out in section 1.6 of the [UK Partnership Agreement](#). The Programmes have the year the Funding becomes available plus a further 3 years in which to spend it.

■ Independent Faith Engagement Review**Darren Jones:**[\[96636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of when the Independent Faith Engagement Review will be published.

Dehenna Davison:

Announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ Social Services and Children: Local Government Finance**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[94821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking fiscal steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide local councils with additional funding for the provision of (a) children's and (b) adult social care services.

Lee Rowley:

Following the Autumn Statement, Government will work to publish the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in due course.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:**[\[93711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the investment plan for the Shared Prosperity Fund in Northern Ireland will be published.

Stephen Farry:[\[93712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to enable projects currently in receipt of European Social Fund support to bid for Shared Prosperity Fund support ahead of April 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to the answer given to [Question UIN95919](#) on 29 November, we are considering the wider funding landscape, including activities funded via predecessor funds and other programmes, and the best way to deliver funding that addresses the needs of Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Information Officers

Deidre Brock: [\[95869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department spent on communications staff in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Mr Alister Jack:

Departmental spend on communications staff for 2020-21 was £906,177, for 2021-22 was £944,645, and for April-October 2022-23 was £612,028.

■ Scotland Office: Information Services

Deidre Brock: [\[95870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department spent on public information campaigns promoting Government policies in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Mr Alister Jack:

Departmental spend on public information campaigns for 2020-21 was £75,681, for 2021-22 was £39,818, and for April-October 2022-23 was £16,003.

■ Scotland Office: Public Expenditure

Deidre Brock: [\[95873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the expenditure of the Union Unit was in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, and (c) 2022-23.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland is not responsible for the funding of a Union Unit.

TRANSPORT

■ Motorways: Safety

Sarah Champion: [\[93553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of incidents in which a vehicle became stranded in a live lane of an all-lane running motorway did detection take more than (a) five and (b) ten minutes in 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

National Highways identifies stopped vehicles through various sources including being notified by the police, public, stopped vehicle detection (SVD) technology where in place, recovery industry and its traffic officers.

To monitor the performance of SVD National Highways sample operational data.

Based on the latest operational data, National Highways detects around two thirds of identified stopped vehicles within 20 seconds and this rises to almost 90% within 60 seconds.

This data also shows almost all stopped vehicles identified by SVD technology were detected within five minutes, excluding very few instances which were deemed to be false alerts.

TREASURY

■ Companies House

Seema Malhotra:

[\[95839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his department has had with officials from Companies House in each of the last 12 months.

Andrew Griffith:

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, including Companies House and BEIS in their role as the sponsoring department for Companies House.

HM Treasury has committed £63 million over the Spending Review period to support reform of Companies House, which is currently being legislated for through the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill.

■ Credit Cards: Fraud

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[96584\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many fraudulent uses of contactless credit cards were reported in the 12 months (a) before and (b) after 15 October 2021.

Andrew Griffith:

The government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime.

The government does not collect data on fraudulent uses of contactless credit cards. UK Finance, an industry body representing UK banks and other payment service providers, in its latest published data, found that fraud on contactless cards and devices in the first half of 2022 totalled £15.4 million. However, spending via contactless cards totalled £117 billion during the same period, meaning that fraud as a proportion of overall spending remains low and equivalent to 1.5p in every £100 spent using contactless technology. This compares to 2.7p in every £100 spent using contactless technology in the first half of 2019. Contactless fraud on payment cards and devices represents less than four per cent of overall card fraud losses, while 57 per cent of all card transactions were contactless in 2021.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) are responsible for setting the legal contactless payment limits, through the Strong Customer Authentication technical

standards. The industry then set their own operational limits up to the legal limit. The £100 legal limit was raised in March 2021 and in October 2021 industry increased their own operational limits to this value. The FCA continue to monitor fraud rates across all payment types and will consider further action as appropriate. More generally, the FCA requires regulated financial services firms to maintain effective systems and controls to prevent the risk that they might be used to further financial crime. This includes controls to prevent fraud.

■ Development Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: **[95903]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the cost of asylum processing backlogs to the official development assistance budget; and what recent estimate he has made of the level of other Departmental expenditure allocated to the official development assistance budget in the last 12 months.

John Glen:

The government is delivering the most comprehensive reform in decades to improve the asylum system, through the New Plan for Immigration. These reforms aim to make the system fair but firm, enabling us to offer support to those most in need while returning those without a genuine right to remain in the UK.

The Government set out its ODA allocations by department at the 2021 spending review.

The UK's ODA spending is reported in the annual Statistics on International Development publication. The final publication for 2021 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2021>.

■ Development Aid: Asylum

Preet Kaur Gill: **[95904]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his written ministerial statement entitled FCDO Update, published on 22 November 2022, HCWS379, how much and what proportion of the additional resources will be allocated to help clear the asylum processing backlog; and how many and what proportion of the asylum applicants that have been waiting for between one and three years will be supported by this funding.

Preet Kaur Gill: **[95905]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his written ministerial statement entitled FCDO Update, published on 22 November 2022, HCWS379, how the additional £2.5 billion of resources will be spent.

John Glen:

Over the past 12 months the government has acted decisively and compassionately to support the people of Ukraine and Afghanistan to escape oppression and conflict and find refuge in the UK.

At the Autumn Statement, the government committed to providing additional resources of £1 billion in 2022-23 and £1.5 billion in 2023-24 to help meet the significant and unanticipated costs which have been incurred.

Funding will be provided through the Reserve and has not yet been allocated to departments; final allocations will be made through the Estimates process.

The UK's ODA spending will be reported in the annual Statistics on International Development publication.

■ Duty Free Allowances**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[96553\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2022 to Question 87732 on Duty Free Allowances, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of evidence from Norway and Switzerland of the impact of the introduction of arrivals duty stores in those countries; and if he will commission a cost benefit analysis of such a policy being applied in the UK.

James Cartlidge:

As mentioned in the answer to Question 87732, duty-free on arrival, which would apply to inbound passengers, could undermine the UK high street and run counter to public health objectives. Any new tax relief will also impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which excise duty makes a significant contribution. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

Although there are no plans to introduce such a scheme, the government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Economic Growth**Caroline Lucas:**[\[94726\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his commitment in the Autumn Statement 2022 to review retained EU law in key growth industries, if he would (a) define the term green industries and (b) set out a timetable and terms of reference for this review.

James Cartlidge:

At the Autumn Statement, to help remove barriers to growth, the Government committed to move rapidly to review retained EU law in named key growth industries, including green. Green industries are central to delivering on our climate and environmental ambitions. Unlocking growth in these industries will establish the UK as a global leader in the technologies required to tackle climate change and reverse

the decline in our natural environment. The Government committed to identify changes that can be made over the next year. More information will be published in due course.

■ **Energy: Taxation**

Caroline Lucas: [\[93497\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of (a) how much oil and gas companies will spend on upstream decarbonisation and (b) by how much the investment allowance for decarbonisation for oil and gas companies will reduce total North Sea revenues in each financial year from 2022-23 to 2027-28.

Caroline Lucas: [\[93498\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of North Sea Oil and Gas companies front-loading investment in new oil and gas extraction over the next three years in order to benefit from additional tax relief under the Energy Profits Levy; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [\[93500\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount Norwegian oil company Equinor could receive in tax relief through the Energy Profits Levy investment allowance if the Rosebank oil field development goes ahead.

Caroline Lucas: [\[93501\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of investment by oil and gas companies in decarbonisation, over the period for which they will be eligible under the Energy Profits Levy for the current investment allowance rate of 80 per cent, will result in the generation of renewable power (a) for use by UK consumers via the grid, and (b) for their own production purposes.

Caroline Lucas: [\[93502\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he will publish the consultation on UK's long-term tax treatment of the North Sea asset out in point 2.11 of the Autumn Statement 2022.

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%, effective from 1 January 2023. The levy has also been extended until 31 March 2028.

The Government has been clear it wants to see the oil and gas sector reinvest its profits to support the economy, jobs and the UK's energy security. That is why, from 1 January 2023, the Government will maintain the existing cash value of the levy's investment allowance for most types of investment expenditure, ensuring that for

every £1 an oil and gas company invests, they will continue being able to claim around 91p in tax relief.

For expenditure in upstream decarbonisation, the allowance will remain at 80%, meaning for every £100 an oil and gas company invests to decarbonise oil and gas production, they will be able to deduct £109.25 when calculating their levy profits. This provides an immediate and significant fiscal incentive to reinvest profits in the UK.

Since the levy is targeted at the extraordinary profits from oil and gas upstream activities, any relief for investment must also be related to oil and gas upstream activities. Therefore, tax relief is only available in relation to expenditure incurred for activity that is charged under the oil and gas ring fence corporation tax regime. For other investments, such as renewables, companies will be able to deduct investment costs from their corporation tax.

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.

Oil and gas producers are commercial entities and the Government does not comment on individual taxpayers.

The Autumn Statement also confirmed the Government will engage stakeholders as part of a review to consider the UK's long-term tax treatment of the North Sea after the Energy Profits Levy ceases in March 2028. Further details will be announced in due course.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[93499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the amount that would be raised by the Energy Profits Levy over the next six years if tax relief is not provided to companies which invest in new oil and gas extraction in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

We estimate that the EPL will raise about £40 billion over the next 6 years, allowing for tax reliefs.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[96521\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2023 to Question 92053, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of Investment Allowances on the Energy Profit Levy on tax revenue.

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 Government has always sought to balance delivering a fair return for the UK from the use of its resources while providing the right conditions to attract investment in the North Sea that is key to support domestic jobs and the nation's energy security. That is why the levy includes and will retain a new investment allowance, which means for every £1 businesses invest they will overall get a tax saving of around 91p.

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 levy's investment allowance.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[96522\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2023 to Question 92055, if he will list the overseas tax and regulatory interventions which were considered as benchmarks for a potential UK levy on combined-cycle gas turbine generators.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[96523\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2023 to Question 92055, if will make an estimate of the potential tax revenue which would be raised from a 45 per cent tax on extraordinary returns from combined-cycle gas turbine generators.

Victoria Atkins:

Gas generators are excluded from the Electricity Generator Levy (EGL) announced at Autumn Statement and the revenue estimates published at Autumn Statement include low-carbon electricity generation only. The UK's approach is in step with the approach taken internationally including the EU's whose proposed cap on the market revenues from electricity producers does not include gas fired generators.

As set out in the Government's response to Question 92055 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 within the EGL could have unintended impacts on electricity pricing with implications for the market as a whole or on certain business models.

■ Financial Services: Fraud

Naz Shah: [\[95863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) financial regulators and (b) the Financial Conduct Authority are equipped to protect people against financial scams.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime. Tackling fraud requires a unified and co-ordinated response from government, regulators, law enforcement and the private sector to better protect the public and businesses from fraud.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires regulated financial services firms to maintain effective systems and controls to prevent the risk that they might be used to further financial crime. This includes controls to prevent fraud.

HM Treasury is taking action through legislation in the Financial Services and Markets Bill, which enables the Payment Systems Regulator to mandate banks to reimburse victims of authorised push payment scams. The Government expects that this legislation will result in more consistent and comprehensive reimbursement outcomes, ensuring victims are not left out of pocket through no fault of their own.

Fraud prevention is supported by wider work of the Payment Systems Regulator, including introducing Confirmation of Payee requirements on the banking sector. This allows customers to check whether the name of a payee's account matches the name and account details provided by a payer.

The Government is also taking action to address fraudulent activity being hosted online through the Online Safety Bill. The Bill includes a new standalone duty requiring large internet firms to tackle fraudulent advertising, including of financial services.

In addition, the Home Office shortly intends to publish a new strategy to address the threat of fraud, working with government, regulators, law enforcement and the private sector.

■ Independent Office for Police Conduct

Neale Hanvey:

[\[93657\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the support provided by HMRC to its officers who are under investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC); what (a) rules, (b) codes of conduct and (c) procedures apply to officers under investigation; and in what circumstances officers can be permitted to continue working on cases in which their personal conduct is subject to an investigation.

Victoria Atkins:

All HMRC Officers have access to an Employee Assist programme, provided by an external provider (PAM Assist) who provide free, confidential, professional advice and support. In addition, line management of officers under investigation are informed of any investigation determined by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in order to provide further support to their staff. Separately, Trade Union support is available to officers. Officers can also contact the HR Expert Advice Service for advice.

The oversight of HMRC by the IOPC who operate in England & Wales, is governed by The Revenue and Customs (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2010. IOPC determined investigations are carried out under these Regulations. All HMRC Officers must comply with the Civil Service Code and HMRC's Conduct policy.

HMRC has policies and processes in place regarding the redeployment and suspension of officers whose conduct is the subject of an IOPC determined investigation and these matters are kept under review as appropriate. Each matter is assessed on its individual circumstances.

■ Mortgages: Interest Rates

Rachael Maskell:

[\[97645\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the affordability of mortgages; and what steps he is taking to ensure that current mortgage holders are protected from losing their properties if they cannot afford their full repayment rates.

Andrew Griffith:

Arrears and repossession levels remain low: according to the latest UK Finance data, 700 residential mortgaged properties were repossessed in Q3 2022. This was lower than the 1,070 in Q1 2020 (pre-pandemic). The Government of course remains watchful of any emerging trends in this space.

It is worth noting though that around 75% of residential mortgage borrowers are on fixed-rate deals and therefore shielded from interest rate rises in the near term. 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.

More broadly, the Government has taken decisive action to support households across the UK through the cost-of-living challenges ahead, whilst remaining fiscally responsible. In addition to the £37 billion of support for the cost of living already announced for 2022-23, the Government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost-of-living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities. The Government is also continuing to provide support to all households through the Energy Price Guarantee, which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

■ Pet Foods: VAT

Sarah Champion:

[\[93554\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing VAT on pet food for 12 months to help support pet owners who are adversely affected by the rise in inflation.

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. Nevertheless, the Government keeps all taxes under constant review.

More widely, the Government understands that people are worried about the cost of living challenges ahead. That's why decisive action has been taken to support households across the UK whilst remaining fiscally responsible. The Government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities.

■ Repossession Orders: Landlords and Mortgages**John McDonnell:**[\[96550\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what systems he has in place to monitor the rates of (a) landlord possession orders and (b) mortgage possession orders.

Andrew Griffith:

Arrears and repossession levels remain low: according to UK Finance data, 700 residential mortgaged properties and 390 buy-to-let mortgage properties were repossessed in Q3 2022. These were both lower than the 1,070 and 640 respectively in Q1 2020 (pre-pandemic).

The Government remains watchful of any emerging trends in this space and engages regularly with mortgage lenders and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to monitor market developments. The Government also closely monitors a wide range of sources that measure levels of financial distress amongst consumers.

It is worth noting though that around 75% of residential mortgage borrowers, and 73% of buy-to-let mortgage borrowers, are on fixed-rate deals and therefore shielded from interest rate rises in the near term. 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.

More broadly, the Government has taken decisive action to support households across the UK through the cost-of-living challenges ahead, whilst remaining fiscally responsible. In addition to the £37 billion of support for the cost of living already

announced for 2022-23, the Government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost-of-living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to benefits uprating, which is worth £11 billion to working age households and people with disabilities. The Government is also continuing to provide support to all households through the Energy Price Guarantee, which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

■ **Swimming: VAT**

Julian Knight:

[\[93566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of potential impact of the cost of VAT on swimming lessons on participation in that sport.

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. While there are exceptions to the standard rate, these have always been strictly limited by both legal and fiscal considerations; one exception being certain supplies of education, which are generally exempt from VAT when certain conditions are met.

Where the sporting services provided by specified eligible bodies include an element of educational training or instruction, they may qualify as exempt supplies of education. Swimming lessons provided by local authorities may be classified as education and therefore exempt from VAT, as are supplies of education made by other relevant non-profit making bodies. This relief only applies to eligible bodies, such as non-profit making organisations, rather than all commercial providers of education.

Going further would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution.

VAT is the UK's third largest tax forecast to raise £157 billion in 2022/23, helping to fund key spending priorities such as important public services, including the NHS, education and defence. Nevertheless, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ **Tax Avoidance**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[94822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with HM Revenue and Customs on the potential merits of providing additional support to people affected by the loan charge.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government recognises that tax burdens including those related to the Loan Charge can add significant pressures.

HMRC has a well-established approach to supporting taxpayers who are struggling to pay their liabilities in full. HMRC offers taxpayers affordable and sustainable instalment arrangements based on their specific circumstances. These Time to Pay

arrangements are flexible, have no maximum length and can be amended if the taxpayer's circumstances change.

HMRC is committed to identifying and supporting taxpayers who need extra help with their tax affairs. HMRC has a dedicated telephone line for those seeking to exit a tax avoidance scheme and a debt helpline, with guidance and training in place for staff on how to identify taxpayers who need extra support.

Where appropriate, HMRC refers taxpayers to outside organisations that can provide further advice and support. In October, HMRC began piloting a new service with Samaritans to provide specialist emotional support via a dedicated helpline number.

■ Treasury: Civil Servants

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[96639\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 80856, for what reasons the former Permanent Secretary to the Treasury left his post on 8 September 2022.

James Cartlidge:

As stated, Sir Tom Scholar left his post on 8 September 2022.

It is long-standing Government policy not to comment on individual personnel matters.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Michael Fabricant:

[\[902543\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the implications for the Government's policies of the decision by FIFA to ban the One Love rainbow armband at the World Cup.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[902545\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she is taking steps to promote LGBT+ rights during the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

David Rutley:

Ministers and senior officials have raised the concerns of LGBT+ visitors with Qatari authorities at all levels, and will continue to engage on this issue during the World Cup. Qatar has repeatedly committed that "everybody is welcome" to the tournament. We will continue to encourage equal treatment and the respect of individual rights, and identify what action the Qatari authorities are taking to match their commitment.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[902544\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the provision of cross-departmental funding for women's centres.

Damian Hinds:

Women's centres play a vital role in supporting women in the community and the Ministry of Justice is investing up to £24 million in community support for women in 2022-25.

Janet Daby:[\[902548\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent steps the Government has taken to (a) reduce the gender pay gap and (b) help tackle (i) unequal pay and (ii) discrimination against women in the labour market.

Maria Caulfield:

The gender pay gap continues to fall, an increasing number of women are in full-time work, and there's a higher percentage of women on FTSE 350 company boards than ever before.

There are strong protections against discrimination on the basis of sex in the Equality Act, including reaffirming equal pay protections.

Through mandatory gender pay gap reporting, we are motivating employers to improve workplace gender equality.

To accelerate this progress we've announced a pay transparency pilot, STEM returners programme, and a Taskforce on Women-Led High-Growth Enterprises.

Christine Jardine:[\[902551\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the impact of rising energy prices on disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

As DWP Ministers, we have frequent discussions with other members of the Government and we are collectively seeking to understand the full impact of the current cost of living on disabled people, across a range of sectors, including energy prices.

■ Conversion Therapy**Apsana Begum:**[\[94888\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if he will publish an equalities impact assessment of the Government's policy on conversion therapy for transgender people.

Apsana Begum:[\[94889\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential impact of not including transgender people in the ban on conversion therapy practices on the health and wellbeing of transgender people.

Stuart Andrew:

Equality Ministers are fully aware of their responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to factor equality impacts into decision-making and do so on all policy including as regards conversion practices, where we are closely considering responses to the public consultation. Such assessments are not generally published.

Equality Hub Ministers and officials have engaged widely on the issue of conversion practices with victims, LGBT groups, healthcare professionals, faith groups, groups advocating for sex-based rights and parliamentarians, as well as other Government departments including the Department of Health and Social Care. This engagement has been a key part of developing proposals and we continue to work closely with stakeholders.

■ Equality: Surveys**Emily Thornberry:**[\[94719\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Answer of 23 November to Question 90762 on Equality: Surveys, if she will list the (a) 12 main questions and (b) 28 sub-questions, and the associated answer options associated with each question, that have been included in the 2022 British Social Attitudes Survey at the request of the Equality Hub.

Stuart Andrew:

The 12 main questions, 28 sub-questions and associated answer options that the Equality Hub have included in the 2022 British Social Attitudes Survey are in the attached document.

Attachments:

1. Questions from British Social Attitudes Survey [Questions from British Social Attitudes Survey.pdf]

■ Public Finance: Equality**Dame Angela Eagle:**[\[902546\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Government has made an assessment of the impact of the Autumn Statement 2022 on equality for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, (c) LGBT+ people and (d) disabled people.

Victoria Atkins:

In developing proposals for fiscal events, such as the Autumn Statement on 17 November, the Treasury follows a rigorous process to ensure we carefully consider the equality impact on those sharing protected characteristics, in line with both its legal obligations and its strong commitment to promoting fairness. In interests of transparency HMRC will publish a summary of equality impacts for tax measures within the Tax Information and Impact Notes (TIINs) alongside the associated legislation.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[96603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the longest wait was to receive an approval for an Access to Work application in the last 12 months.

Tom Pursglove:

The longest wait to receive an approval for an Access to Work application in the last 12 months was 254 working days. This was primarily made up of wait time for allocation to a case manager and wait time for the customer to provide the information requested to progress the application.

Access to Work has received 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.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standards. They should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Carer's Allowance

Drew Hendry:

[\[96622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing (a) the number of hours individuals can work whilst receiving carers allowance and (b) increasing flexibility within carers allowance to allow for partial payment alongside paid work.

Tom Pursglove:

The weekly Carer's Allowance earnings limit will increase to £139 a week from April 2023. This means the earnings limit will have increased by more than a third since 2010.

Carer's Allowance is not payable once net earnings exceed this figure. Carer's Allowance "work rules" operate on the basis of an earnings limit, rather than hours worked. There are no plans to change this broad approach.

Many carers who are receiving Carer's Allowance and doing some work will also be receiving Universal Credit. For those receiving Universal Credit, the 55% taper rate and any applicable work allowance will help to ensure that people are better off in work.

David Warburton:

[96634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on raising the earnings limit for Carer's Allowance ahead of the benefits uplift in April 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

The Carer's Allowance earnings limit is regularly reviewed and increased when it is warranted and affordable. It will increase to £139 a week net earnings from April 2023.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Fleur Anderson:

[93668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to support older people who lost their jobs as a result of shielding during the Covid-19 pandemic with (a) finances (b) employment opportunities and (c) access to training.

Guy Opperman:

The Government recognises the challenges faced by some aged 50 and over. This is why we are providing over £20m over the next three years for an enhanced offer for people aged 50 and over to remain in and return to work.

Eligible older job seekers on Universal Credit will receive more intensive, tailored support during the first nine months of their claim, on top of the support that work coaches offer all claimants on skills provision and job search support.

37 full-time 50 PLUS Champions are now in every JCP district across Great Britain, to upskill Work Coaches in supporting over 50s return to work.

The Government is investing in re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities to make sure adults, at any age, can upskill to reach their potential, transforming lives and delivering on the National Skills Fund commitment. As part of this investment, we have introduced the Free Courses for Jobs scheme, which enables learners without a level 3 qualification (or learners with any qualification level but earning below the National Living Wage) to gain a qualification free.

In addition, learners who want to upskill in their role, are looking for work or are changing career can take part in Skills Bootcamps. Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast track to an interview with an employer. Skills Bootcamps have the potential to transform the skills landscape for adults and employers.

The Government is committed to providing financial support for those who are unable to work or who are on a low income. More information can be found at [Benefits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/benefits)

■ Employment Schemes: Contracts

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[96607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which providers his Department has awarded national employment support contracts to in the last five years.

Mims Davies:

The following Prime organisations have been awarded national employment support contracts in the last 5 years.

Capita Group Plc

Fedcap Employment Limited

G4S Facilities Management (UK) Ltd.

Ingeus UK Ltd

Jobs 22 Ltd

MAXIMUS UK Services Limited

Reed in Partnership

Seetec Pluss Ltd

Serco Group

Shaw Trust

The Growth Company Ltd

Tracing Services Limited

■ Employment Services: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[94812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many disability employment advisers are trained in the use of British Sign Language.

Tom Pursglove:

The information requested is not readily available. Disability Employment Advisers (DEA) do not receive additional training in the use of British Sign Language (BSL). There will be some staff in the DEA role who are BSL proficient, but this information is not collated centrally by the department.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to making its services accessible for all its customers, together with those who may have additional communication needs including hearing loss.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) work alongside Jobcentre Work Coaches and Youth Employability Coaches to support claimants, including those with hearing loss. They provide expert knowledge on how to support disabled customers and building the skills and capability of Work Coaches. DEAs can also directly support customers

with health conditions and disabilities where this can benefit the customer. Every Work Coach in every Jobcentre has access to a DEA.

Deaf and hard of hearing customers visiting Jobcentres are able to access different support based on how hearing loss affects their communication needs. Jobcentres are equipped and currently provide mainly portable, but also some fixed hearing loops across the network, for those customers with hearing loss.

For those customers who are deaf or hard of hearing and attending a prearranged appointment with DWP, staff have access to a language services contract to pre-book an interpreter to support face to face contact. The interpreter will be skilled in providing non-spoken language support, including BSL.

Following the expansion of the Video Relay Service last year, whereby deaf customers are now able to make an inbound telephone call to DWP via a BSL interpreter using a video connection, DWP is currently exploring how this technology can be adapted to support video remote interpreting which will enable outbound contact. This will increase the flexibility for DWP to conduct face to face and telephony-based contact with deaf and hard of hearing customers.

The Employer and Partnerships role within DWP forms effective networks with a variety of local stakeholders, including organisations and charities that support customers with hearing loss. These relationships are vital to ensure that DWP is able to provide consistent and effective support to its customers.

On a national level, DWP has established a range of networks with its stakeholders to provide a voice for the customer. Stakeholder groups such as the Reasonable Adjustments Forum and the Operational Stakeholder Engagement Forum regularly meet with a cross section of organisations representing disabilities, including those with hearing loss. The purpose of these forums is to ensure that DWP elicits feedback and insight into how its services are being used by those with additional communication needs and to seek continuous improvement.

■ Employment Services: Young People

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[94813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many youth employability coaches are trained in the use of British Sign Language.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[94814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Youth Hubs have a staff member trained in the use of British Sign Language.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not readily available. Youth Employability Coaches and DWP staff based at Youth Hubs do not receive additional training in the use of British Sign Language (BSL). There may be some staff in these roles who are BSL proficient, but this information is not collated centrally by the department.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to making its services accessible for all its customers and our Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches are trained to consider a person's circumstances and to tailor support to their individual needs. Customers who are deaf or hard of hearing and attending a prearranged appointment with DWP, either at a Jobcentre or a Youth Hub, are able to access different support based on how hearing loss affects their communication needs. We provide mainly portable, but also some fixed hearing loops across the network and staff have access to a language services contract to pre-book an interpreter to support face to face contact. The interpreter will be skilled in providing non-spoken language support including BSL.

Furthermore, a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) is assigned to each Jobcentre site. Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs) work alongside Jobcentre Work Coaches and Youth Employability Coaches to support claimants, including those with hearing loss. They provide expert knowledge on how to support disabled customers and building the skills and capability of Work Coaches. DEAs can also directly support customers with health conditions and disabilities where this can benefit the customer. Every Work Coach in every Jobcentre has access to a DEA.

Following the expansion of Video Relay Service last year, whereby deaf customers are now able to make an inbound telephone call to DWP via a British Sign Language interpreter using a video connection, DWP is currently exploring how this technology can be adapted to support video remote interpreting which will enable outbound contact. This will increase the flexibility for DWP to conduct face to face and telephony based contact with deaf and hard of hearing customers.

The Employer and Partnerships role within DWP forms effective networks with a variety of local stakeholders, including organisations and charities that support customers with hearing loss. These relationships are vital to ensure that DWP is able to provide consistent and effective support to its customers.

On a national level, DWP has established a range of networks with its stakeholders to provide a voice for the customer. Stakeholder groups such as the Reasonable Adjustments Forum and the Operational Stakeholder Engagement Forum regularly meet with a cross section of organisations representing disabilities including those with hearing loss. The purpose of these forums is to ensure that DWP elicits feedback and insight into how its services are being used by those with additional communication needs and to seek continuous improvement.

■ Employment: Disability

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[95981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the Government's progress in increasing the number of disabled people in work.

Tom Pursglove:

According to the latest figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) on working age (16-64) employment, there were 4.9 million disabled people in employment in the UK

in Q3 2022. This is an increase of 240,000 on the year and an overall increase of 2.0 million since the same quarter in 2013.

The Government set a goal to see a million more disabled people in employment between 2017 and 2027.

Figures released for Q1 2022 showed that between Q1 2017 and Q1 2022 the number of disabled people in employment increased by 1.3 million – meaning the goal was met after only five years.

Estimations suggest that the rise in the total number of disabled people in employment between 2013 and 2021 has been driven by several factors. These include: an increase in disability prevalence (50%), a strong labour market (20%), internal factors such as Government policy (25%), and an increase in the size of the working population (5%).

■ **Employment: Economic Growth**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[96604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89816 on Employment: Economic Growth, whether his Department has made an estimate of the cost of conducting the workforce review announced in the Autumn Statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Department will work across Government in order to conduct work looking at workforce participation, utilising existing budgets. No estimate of the cost of this work has been made.

■ **Household Support Fund**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[94801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department will make additional funds available to local authorities which use up their Housing Support Fund allocation.

Mims Davies:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living which is why, in addition to the over £37 billion of support we have already provided for cost of living pressures in 2022-23, we are acting now to ensure support continues throughout 2023/24.

The current Household Support Fund, running from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, is providing £421m of funding for those most in need. For York, the funding is currently £1,037, 906.47. The devolved administrations have been allocated £79 million through the Barnett formula.

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.

For those who require extra support, the Government is providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England in the next financial year. This is on top of what we have provided since October 2021, bringing total funding for this particular support to £2.5 billion.

In England this will be delivered through an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £842 million, running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which local authorities use to help households with the cost of essentials. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

■ Occupational Health: Small Businesses

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[95936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in relation to Answer of 14 November 2022 Question 80893 on occupational health, when he plans to start financial incentive and market navigation support for small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed people.

Tom Pursglove:

As referenced in the answer to Question 80893, The Government has committed to testing a financial incentive and market navigation support scheme to gather evidence on whether this is effective in increasing access to OH for SMEs and self-employed people. We have begun to test the concepts in a prototyping phase, and subject to test findings, funding and approvals, we expect to test the end-to-end service at small scale in 2023.

■ Restart Scheme

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[96605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much of the budget allocated to the Restart programme has been spent to date.

Guy Opperman:

The total amount spent to date on the Restart programme is £596.5m of which £343.8m was spent in 2021/22 and £252.7m year to date expenditure in 22/23.

■ Social Security Benefits: Feltham and Heston

Seema Malhotra:

[\[95844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households in the Feltham and Heston constituency have been affected by the household benefit cap in the last three years.

Guy Opperman:

Information on the number of households, receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who were affected by the Benefit Cap, by month and Parliamentary Constituency, is published every three months and can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[95982]

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

Tom Pursglove:

Our Fraud Plan, Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System, published on 19 May 2022, sets out our approach and explains how the additional investment is allowing us to recruit 1,400 more staff into our counter-fraud teams, establish a new 2,000-strong team dedicated to reviewing 2 million existing Universal Credit (UC) claims and develop enhanced data analytics as a means of preventing and detecting fraud and error. More information on our Fraud Plan can be found here:

[Fighting Fraud in the Welfare System - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fighting-fraud-in-the-welfare-system)

The Government is investing £1.4billion of funding over the next three years in order to combat fraud and error, which includes a further £613 million to facilitate a number of new initiatives, which collectively will stop an estimated £2.0 billion of loss in fraud and error over the next three years. An additional £280m to help prevent abuse of the system and drive forward UC case checks was announced in the recent Autumn Statement.

This builds on the existing work DWP have done to address overpayments, with savings from the correction and prevention of fraud and error totalling £2 billion last year.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Peter Gibson:

[93644]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance he has provided to Job Centres on the replacement of the DS1500 form for terminally ill people with the SR1 form.

Tom Pursglove:

All DWP internal processes and supporting guidance have been updated to reflect the introduction of the SR1 form to support claims made under the 12-month Special Rules for End of Life eligibility criteria.

Peter Gibson:

[93645]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether information submitted by a medical professional to his Department regarding claimants with terminal illness can be shared with a third party without the claimant's consent.

Tom Pursglove:

Claims made under the Special Rules for End of Life are in most cases supported by a short medical evidence form called the DS1500 or SR1, provided by a relevant clinician.

This information can be provided directly to DWP by the claimant's clinician. DWP may share medical evidence with its commissioned assessment providers so they can advise whether the claimant meets the 'Special Rules' eligibility criteria. The DWP would not share medical evidence outside of these secure channels. A third party acting on behalf of the 'Special Rules' claimant may ask the claimant's clinician if they can receive a copy. For PIP, DLA and AA, any person representing the patient can make a third party claim on their behalf. For UC and ESA, only an appointee or a person who has power of attorney can make a third-party claim on the patient's behalf.

Peter Gibson:

[\[93646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if there is a facility for a third party to submit an SR1 form on behalf of a claimant.

Tom Pursglove:

The SR1 form can only be completed by a registered clinician such as; a GP, a hospital consultant, a specialty doctor, a hospice doctor, a senior specialist nurse (such as clinical nurse specialist, advanced nurse practitioner or similar).

Registered clinicians can return the SR1 form directly to the DWP by email or by post. Alternatively, the claimant can return a completed SR1 by post to the relevant address provided on the form.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Hilary Benn:

[\[94685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the increase in the State pension on pensioners who receive a small amount of pension credit.

Laura Trott:

State Pensions and Pension Credit will increase by 10.1% from 10 April 2023, so there will be no reduction in Pension Credit payable as a result of the increase in State Pensions.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad

Emma Hardy:

[\[94845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment the potential financial impact of the freeze on the state pensions for British people living abroad on people receiving a UK pension in (a) Canada, (b) Australia and (c) India.

Laura Trott:

DWP does not make such an assessment. The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. Entitlement is based on an individual's national insurance record. The policy on up-rating UK State Pensions overseas is long-standing and has been supported by successive post-war Governments for over 70 years. We continue to up-rate UK State Pensions abroad

where there is a legal requirement to do so – for example where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating. There are no plans to change this policy.

■ **Unemployment**

Alison McGovern:

[96601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Answer of 22 November to Question 87831, for what reason no assessment has been made.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is examining workforce participation and economic inactivity. This work is ongoing.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ China: Armed Forces

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[76191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any Chinese personnel have attended training courses at (a) the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, (b) Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, (c) Britannia Royal Naval College, (d) Royal Air College Cranwell and (e) other training establishments of the armed forces in the last five years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 7 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

James Heappey:

Chinese personnel attended the following courses at UK Armed Forces training establishments in the last five years:

YEAR	ESTABLISHMENT	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
2019-20	Defence Academy	Royal College of Defence Studies	1
2019	All Arms Drill Wing Pirbright	All Arms Basic Drill Instructor Course	2
2019	All Arms Drill Wing Pirbright	All Arms Advanced Drill Instructor Course	2
2019	Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search Training Regiment	International Explosive Ordnance Disposal Maritime Course	1
2018-19	RAF Cranwell	Initial Officer Training	1
2018-19	Defence Academy	Royal College of Defence Studies	2
2018	All Arms Drill Wing Pirbright	All Arms Advanced Drill Instructor Course	1
2018	Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search Training Regiment	International Search Adviser Course	1

YEAR	ESTABLISHMENT	COURSE TITLE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
2017-18	Defence Academy	Royal College of Defence Studies	2
2017-18	RAF Cranwell	Aircrew Instructors Course	8
2017	RAF Cranwell	Aircrew Instructors Course	2
2017	All Arms Drill Wing Pirbright	All Arms Basic Drill Instructor Course	3
2016-17	Defence Academy	Royal College of Defence Studies	2
2016-17	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst	Initial Officer Training	2
2016-17	Defence Academy	Advanced Command and Staff Course	4

No sensitive information was included within any of this training. No training has been provided to Chinese personnel after this period, either in the UK or in the People's Republic of China.

The numbers of Chinese nationals who have attended UK Defence training establishments from 2010 is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	RAF CRANWELL	ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST	ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE DARTMOUTH	JOINT SERVICES COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE SHRIVENHAM	DEFENCE ACADEMY (ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES)	ALL ARMS DRILL WING PIRBRIGHT	DEFENCE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL, MUNITION S AND SEARCH TRAINING REGIMENT	TOTAL
2010-11	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	8
2011-12	2	1	0	2	3	0	0	8

FINANCIAL YEAR	RAF CRANWELL	ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST	ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE DARTMOUTH	JOINT SERVICES COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE SHRIVENHAM	DEFENCE ACADEMY (ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES)	ALL ARMS DRILL WING PIRBRIGHT	DEFENCE EXPLOSIVES ORDNANCE DISPOSAL, MUNITIONS AND SEARCH TRAINING REGIMENT	TOTAL
2012-13	2	2	0	2	3	0	0	9
2013-14	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	8
2014-15	5	2	0	0	1	0	0	8
2015-16	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	5
2016-17	4	2	0	1	2	1	0	10
2017-18	8	0	0	0	2	3	0	13
2018-19	2	0	0	0	2	6	1	11
2019-20	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	5
2020-21	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

I offer here a more comprehensive picture than has been previously requested.

Numbers have changed from previous answers for a number of reasons: the inclusion of RCDS (a Defence establishment, but not a military base); the capturing of some activity not previously counted; and some changes due to realigning figures from calendar to financial years.

The UK has never provided training that contained any sensitive information and it did not compromise the Official Secrets Act. No training has been provided to Chinese personnel since 2020, either in the UK or in the People's Republic of China.

John Healey:

[82179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Chinese Armed Forces personnel were provided with training at UK military bases in each year since 2010.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

James Heappey:

The numbers of Chinese Armed Forces personnel attending courses at UK Armed Forces establishments from 2010 is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NO. OF CHINESE NATIONALS
2010/2011	6
2011/2012	5
2012/2013	4
2013/2014	5
2014/2015	5
2015/2016	4
2016/2017	3
2017/2018	14
2018/2019	5
2019/2020	7
2020/2021	0
2021/2022	0

The UK has never provided training that contained any sensitive or classified information and it did not compromise the Official Secrets Act. No training has been provided to Chinese personnel since 2020, either in the UK or in the People's Republic of China.

The numbers of Chinese nationals who have attended UK Defence training establishments from 2010 is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	RAF CRANWELL	ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST	ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE DARTMOUTH	JOINT SERVICES COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE SHRIVENHAM	DEFENCE ACADEMY (ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES)	ALL ARMS DRILL WING PIRBRIGHT	DEFENCE EXPLOSIVES ORDNANCE DISPOSAL, MUNITION S AND SEARCH TRAINING REGIMENT	TOTAL
2010-11	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	8
2011-12	2	1	0	2	3	0	0	8
2012-13	2	2	0	2	3	0	0	9
2013-14	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	8
2014-15	5	2	0	0	1	0	0	8
2015-16	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	5
2016-17	4	2	0	1	2	1	0	10
2017-18	8	0	0	0	2	3	0	13
2018-19	2	0	0	0	2	6	1	11
2019-20	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	5
2020-21	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

I offer here a more comprehensive picture than has been previously requested.

Numbers have changed from previous answers for a number of reasons: the inclusion of RCDS (a Defence establishment, but not a military base); the capturing of some activity not previously counted; and some changes due to realigning figures from calendar to financial years.

The UK has never provided training that contained any sensitive information and it did not compromise the Official Secrets Act. No training has been

provided to Chinese personnel since 2020, either in the UK or in the People's Republic of China.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance – Energy Price Guarantee (Domestic)

Minister of State (Minister for Energy and Climate) (Graham Stuart):

[\[HCWS398\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund totalling £3,531,500,000 to enable initial expenditure on the Government's Energy Price Guarantee – Domestic Scheme to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act.

The funding is urgently required for HM Government to provide domestic support for household energy bills.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £3,531,500,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3,531,500,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advances will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent to the related Supply and Appropriation Bill.

The amount requested provides for initial scheme expenditure only, in anticipation of Parliament voting for the resource required for this financial year through an out of turn estimate. Due to urgency, the Contingencies Fund advance provides the immediate cash requirement in the period between scheme start and Parliamentary approval.

Further information can be found in the "Central Government Supply Estimates 2022-23, Out-of-Turn Supplementary Estimates, October 2022" available at [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Online Safety Bill - Government Amendments

Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy (Paul Scully):

[\[HCWS403\]](#)

The Online Safety Bill is a vital piece of legislation, and this Government is committed to ensuring that it does more to protect children and ensure that any provisions for adults consider the importance of free speech. On 29 November, the DCMS Secretary of State issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) setting out a number of policy changes to achieve this aim.

The approach we are taking has three main aims. We are strengthening the protections for children in the Bill, ensuring that adults' right to legal free speech is protected, and also creating a genuine system of transparency, accountability and control to give the British public more choice and power over their own accounts and experience. The

Secretary of State's WMS yesterday set out these changes in detail, alongside additional changes we're seeking to make.

Given the Bill's stage of passage, it is not possible to make the majority of these changes at Report stage, as the amendments relate to clauses that were debated on the first day of Report. Therefore, as mentioned in the Secretary of State's WMS of 29 November, the Government intends to return a limited number of clauses to a Public Bill Committee. This process would allow the proposed changes to go through robust and thorough scrutiny in the Commons, and would provide for line-by-line scrutiny of the amendments being made. The recommitted clauses would then come back to the whole House for debate at a third day of Report stage. A vote on this recommitment motion will take place immediately after Report stage on 5 December.

As amendments for consideration at Committee cannot be formally tabled before that vote has passed, I am therefore setting out alongside this statement indicative drafting to demonstrate the amendments we will be tabling should a Committee stage take place, so that Parliamentary colleagues can consider them in detail and understand the Government's intentions with the Bill. These amendments are substantively final and the policies that they reflect will not change, the draft amendment paper, attached as annex A, includes explanatory statements of each amendment. However, small tweaks to the drafting may be required before the amendments are formally tabled, to ensure that they are as clear and effective as possible. Amendments in the paper are based on the most recent Bill print, which follows amendments at the Bill's previous Public Bill Committee stage.

I am acutely aware of, and fully agree with, Parliament's desire to see this legislation enacted. I will therefore be seeking to keep the recommittal process as short as possible within the bounds of allowing proper consideration of the changes, and anticipate that should the recommittal process proceed, the Bill will be passed to the House of Lords for consideration in January. I intend to work closely with Parliament to ensure that we are able to get this vital piece of legislation onto the statute book in this Parliamentary session.

Attachments:

1. ANNEX A - Draft Amendment Paper [ANNEX A - Draft Amendment Paper.pdf]

■ **Publication of the Government Response to Public Consultations for Improving the UK's Cyber Resilience**

Minister for Media, Data, and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez): [\[HCWS401\]](#)

Today, the Department publishes the Government response to the consultation for improving the UK's cyber resilience, which sought the public's views on a package of measures.

Cyber resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure and technology are essential for the development of a thriving digital economy. The Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations 2018 provide legal measures to boost the overall level of security of

network and information systems that are critical for the provision of digital services and essential services.

In recent times, the frequency and scale of cyber incidents against UK targets are increasing the risk of severe damage to critical national infrastructure and the resilience of the economy. High-profile incidents in the last few years, such as the compromise of SolarWinds supply chain and the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack, as well as incidents this year including the attacks on the NHS 111 services and South Staffordshire Water, have demonstrated the devastating impact cyber attacks can have, and as such it is essential that legislation in the UK evolves to boost our defence.

In January 2022, the Government launched a public consultation on proposals to improve the UK's cyber resilience, which included seven individual measures relating to the NIS Regulations, as well as further measures focusing on cyber skills (the consultation and Government response for which is available [here](#)). The consultation aimed to gather feedback on the proposals, including favourability, and suggestions on how they could be refined, in order to continue their development further. Understanding the support from the public on these proposals and the nature of the feedback will allow us to ensure the amendments contribute to development of our cyber security legislation and ensure that we can effectively manage future cyber risks.

The Government response, relating to pillars one and two of the consultation, covers the entirety of the United Kingdom. Pillar one seeks to bring managed service providers in scope of NIS, as well as considering a more flexible and risk-based supervisory regime for digital services, ensuring greater resilience of the UK's most critical digital service providers. Pillar two seeks to make amendments to the NIS Regulations to future-proof the legislation, and allow the UK to adapt to emerging, evolving, and critical threats. These changes would allow updating amendments to be made to the Regulations, new sectors and sub-sectors added, and existing sectors expanded via secondary legislation. In addition, the proposals would also amend the existing cost recovery system to implement an improved, fairer scheme; amend the incident reporting thresholds to include incidents that do not actually affect the continuity of the service directly, but nonetheless pose a significant risk to the security and resilience of the entities; and allow regulators to designate critical dependencies in their supply chain for which their services rely on.

Overall the feedback on the proposals has been very positive. This high level of support from industry demonstrates a recognition of the importance of these proposals in enhancing the resilience of the UK's critical national infrastructure, which is critical for the continued growth of our economy.

The full Government response to the proposals is available on the Government website.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement in Principle

Secretary of State for International Trade (Kemi Badenoch):

[[HCWS400](#)]

Earlier this year, the Government launched negotiations on a Digital Trade Agreement as part of our commitment to the people of Ukraine. I am pleased to report that we have now reached agreement in principle on a deal that supports Ukraine's economy, the country's reconstruction and further cements the UK's position as a global leader in digital trade.

The UK is steadfast in our support of the people of Ukraine in their brave struggle against Putin's cruel and brutal war. We will continue to do everything in our power to support Ukraine's fight and help ensure the long-term security and prosperity of Ukraine, as a free and sovereign nation. The UK-Ukraine Digital Trade Agreement is one way we are achieving this.

Greater digitalisation of the economy is a key priority for our Ukrainian partners. They rightly recognise the UK as a global leader in digital trade, which is why they are striking their first ever digital trade agreement with us. This Agreement will boost productivity, jobs, and growth and allow us to help Ukraine deliver on their digital ambitions.

The deal emulates the UK-led agreement on the G7 Digital Trade Principles under our Presidency last year, namely:

- Ensure open digital markets, including through crucial commitments such as a ban on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions.
- Support cross-border data flows, including financial data, and prohibiting the unfair imposed localisation of data as well as committing to high standards of personal data protection.
- Champion digital trading systems to cut red tape and make trade cheaper, faster, and more secure for businesses.
- Uphold consumer benefits and business safeguards in digital trade. This includes important matters such as cybersecurity, the protection of source code and online consumer protection.

Our Digital Trade Agreement with Ukraine will expand on the current UK-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement by modernising our bilateral trade in the digital era and deepening our economic ties with Ukraine. The UK's services exports to Ukraine are increasingly digitised, with UK exports of digitally-delivered services and goods in trade amounting to £132 million in 2020 – 73% of all UK services exports to Ukraine. This deal will enable UK and Ukrainian businesses to trade in each other's markets more easily, and help Ukrainian businesses recover from the impact of this cruel war.

Modern global trade is now digital. The UK is a forward-thinking trading partner in the modern global economy. And this agreement sends a strong message to the people of Ukraine: we stand with you – now and throughout your economic reconstruction.

Following the agreement in principle, the legal text will now be finalised and prepared for signature. Signature of the agreement will take place at a future date, after which the agreement will also be presented to Parliament for scrutiny in the usual way.

JUSTICE

■ Government's response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review consultation

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice (Mike Freer): [\[HCWS402\]](#)

Today I am publishing the government's full response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review (CLAIR).

First, I would like to thank Lord Bellamy KC for his Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid and its recommendations. In March 2022, in response to Lord Bellamy's Independent Review, we consulted on proposals that would mark the most significant reform to criminal legal aid in more than a decade, and would include an additional investment of around £135m per year

We set out our immediate fee reforms in the Interim Response which was published on 20 July 2022. In this Interim Response, we committed to increase most fees by 15% and this came into force on 30 September 2022. We also extended the scope of payment for Pre-Charge Engagement work to cover work done ahead of an agreement, or where an agreement is not reached, in appropriate cases, in line with the Attorney General's Disclosure Guidelines.

Following further discussions with stakeholders, we were also able to lay a Statutory Instrument in October 2022 to apply the 15% increase to cases that already had a representation order granted on or after 17 September 2020 but had not yet had a main hearing (with further reforms, including to remuneration for Section 28 cases, to come).

In this full consultation response, published today, we set out our plans for longer-term systemic change. The full consultation covers the 203 responses received to 106 consultation questions. We have been working hard to analyse the responses of all stakeholders to ensure our decisions are rooted in evidence. We are committing to an increased investment of £138m per year in total. This means an extra £85m for solicitors and £43m for the Bar in legal aid payments, as well as an additional £11m on expert fees, will eventually be spent every year to ensure long term sustainability. Included in the full consultation response are details of the newly established Criminal Legal Aid Advisory Board (CLAAB), which brings together criminal justice system partners to discuss the operation of the criminal legal aid system and make recommendations to the Lord Chancellor. The Board met for the first time at the end of October 2022 and will continue to meet quarterly.

We have listened to consultation respondents and we propose reallocating money originally set aside to expand the Public Defender Service, to introduce training grants and for further reform of the Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme (LGFS). Instead, we are proposing structural reforms to police station fees and intend to consult further on a standard police station fee model, allocating £16m to harmonising the fee scheme. This

means that, when considered with the funding uplift that came into effect on 30 September, funding for the vital work undertaken by solicitors in the police station will increase by 30%. We are also continuing to look at how we can improve the uptake of legal advice in custody, in particular for children.

We do not consider that structural reform of the Magistrates' Court fee scheme beyond the 15% fee increase already implemented is necessary, and this is supported by consultation responses. However, on top of this uplift, we will allocate an additional £5m towards Youth Court reform from the 2024/25 financial year, which is expected to particularly benefit both solicitors and some junior barristers, as well as children.

My Department will model and consult on a revised LGFS scheme based on current data with a view to rely less heavily on Pages of Prosecution Evidence (PPE) and instead focus more on fixed basic fees for each offence type.

As we set out in October 2022, over the remainder of this Spending Review period, an additional £3m of funding will be made available for case preparation like written work and special preparation, as well as a further £4m for defence barristers involved in pre-recorded cross-examinations, which are used to reduce the trauma of a trial for vulnerable victims and witnesses by early 2023.

Our full consultation response also covers Very High Cost Cases (VHCCs) and Interim Fixed Fee Offers (IFFOs) as well as fees for prison law and Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) work. Further proposals will be developed after consultation on how to revise the IFFO fee calculator.

Taken together, the reforms we have announced in the government's interim and full consultation responses will enable us to support a sustainable, diverse and stable criminal justice system in the long term. They will ensure that legal professionals are supported and remunerated fairly, in a way that reflects the development and changes that have occurred in our justice system since the initial conception of the fee schemes. Most importantly, they will ultimately benefit victims and everyone relying on the criminal justice system.

Continuing to engage the criminal defence sector, including the Bar Council and Law Society, remains important as we develop our final policies. I look forward to continuing our constructive work with criminal legal aid practitioners on criminal justice issues.

TREASURY

■ The Double Taxation Convention between the United Kingdom and Brazil

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Victoria Atkins):

[[HCWS399](#)]

A Double Taxation Convention with Brazil was signed in Brazil on 29 November. The text of the Convention is available on HM Revenue and Customs' pages of the GOV.UK website and will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. The text of the Convention will be scheduled to a draft Order in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.