



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 2 December 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:30 P.M., 02 December 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Alternative Fuel Payments

Cat Smith: [\[94785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when households that use alternative fuels will receive payments through the Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The details of when this payment will be made will be confirmed shortly. The Government is committed to delivering this support to customers as fast as possible this Winter.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[97756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when households eligible for the Alternative Fuel Payment will receive the £200 as a credit on their electricity bill; and whether this will be delivered as a lump-sum.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Alternative Fuel Payment scheme will provide a one-off payment to eligible UK (GB and NI) households.

Households eligible for these payments in Great Britain will receive £200 as a credit on their electricity bill this winter. The details of when this payment will be made will be confirmed shortly. The Government is committed to delivering this support to customers as fast as possible.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[97757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when households which will be eligible for the Alternative Fuel Payment but will not receive the payment automatically because they do not have a relationship with an electricity supplier will be able to make an online application.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: Eligible households will receive the Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) this Winter.

Further details on when households that do not have a relationship with an electricity supplier can apply for the AFP will be confirmed shortly.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[98732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will publish an additional Alternative Fuel Payment to reflect the energy price cap announced by Ofgem for the January 2023 to March 2023 period.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has doubled to £200 the level of support for households that use alternative fuels, such as heating oil, LPG, coal or biomass, to heat their homes. This support will be delivered as soon as possible this winter.

■ **Cancer: Research****Amy Callaghan:**[\[95941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much public funding his Department has spent on cancer research in each year since 2015.

George Freeman:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), a partner organisation of BEIS, funds research relating to cancer across all UKRI councils.

The table below presents spend data for each of the relevant Research Councils for each year from 2015/16 to 2020/21.

Cancer research

YEAR	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
UKRI spend £m [i]	98.1	116.9	109	114.4	119.1	125.5
MRC spend £m	96.2	102.7	93.4	96.3	101.6	106.6
BBSRC spend £m	Data not available	12.9	14.3	15.2	14.2	15.2
ESRC spend £m	1.9	1.3	1.3	2.9	3.3	3.7

Notes on cancer research figures

1. Spend figures include data provided by Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Medical Research Council (MRC).
2. Spend data for Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Innovate UK (IUK), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Research England (RE) and Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) are not provided.
3. BBSRC spend data for 2015/16 is unavailable.
4. MRC and BBSRC spend is provided by the National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI). Spend is based on the percentage of each research project that is relevant to cancer research.

5. ESRC total spend for each relevant grant is included in the data above.
6. BBSRC spend figures represent underpinning bioscience research relevant to cancer. BBSRC does not fund research directly to understanding specific human diseases.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Infrastructure

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[97387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2022 to Question 93406 on Carbon Capture and Storage: Technology and with reference to The University of Manchester's report entitled Capturing the Carbon Opportunity published in 2022, whether his Department plans to take steps to scale up (a) storage and (b) transport infrastructure for the carbon that is captured in an industrial process.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Government recognises the critical role that carbon capture and storage can play in supporting industrial decarbonisation across the UK and in delivering Net Zero. That is why the Government launched the Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage cluster sequencing process, with the aim of having four clusters operational by 2030. Following the selection of the first two clusters – Hynet and the East Coast Cluster – the Government recently announced a shortlist of projects to proceed to due diligence. Details of the process for selecting the next two clusters will be set out in due course.

■ Coal: Mining

Sam Tarry:

[\[95974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will make it its policy to permanently cancel any plans to open new coal mines.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave the Hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion on 28th September 2022 to Question [51588](#).

■ Diesel and Petrol: Prices

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[97469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will hold discussions with trade bodies representing oil companies on the extent of variances of forecourt prices for petrol and diesel.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: Following the Government's request for an urgent review of the fuel market, the Competition and Markets Authority published its road fuel report on 8 July. Its initial findings were that the UK retail fuel market

appears to be competitive but areas for further investigation were identified. A market study to look at the growing gap between the oil price, and the wholesale price of petrol and diesel was launched which will make recommendations where there are no legitimate reasons for this. The Government will carefully consider, alongside relevant industry partners, any recommendations made in the study.

■ District Heating

Stella Creasy: [\[97567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of (a) the number of people living in homes with a communal heating system who are not subject to the domestic energy price cap for their heating and (b) the cost to this group of not being covered by the Government's energy price guarantee this winter.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Experimental Statistics on Heat Networks published by the Government in 2018 showed that there are approximately 440,000 residential heat network customers in the UK.

Heat network consumers with domestic electricity contracts will receive capped electricity prices through the Energy Price Guarantee, credits of £400 on their electricity bills through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, and reduced heat prices via the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

■ Emergency Services: Power Failures

Angela Rayner: [\[98804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2022 to Question 88892 on Care Homes and Hospitals: Power Failures, how many civil servants are employed to oversee the Electricity Emergency Supply Code as of 29 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Thirty-five civil servants are in the team responsible for security and resilience in the energy sector, including responsibility for the Electricity Supply Emergency Code.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[96616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his planned timetable is for the publication of further information on the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Government is finalising the details of the Alternative Funding to have the process up and running for applications this winter.

Further details on eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced very shortly.

Karin Smyth:

[\[97573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when payments under the (a) Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund and (b) Alternative Fuel Payments Fund will begin.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Government is working to finalise the details of EBSS Alternative Funding and have the process up and running for applications this winter. Eligibility, timescales and method of delivery of will be announced in the coming weeks.

For the Alternative Fuel Payments, the Government will deliver this £200 payment to eligible households as soon as possible this Winter. The Government will announce further information on the delivery and timing of these payments in due course.

■ Energy Bills Rebate and Energy Price Guarantee

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[95760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his department will publish a comparative analysis of the support available under the (a) Energy Bill Relief Scheme and (b) Energy Price Guarantee.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: Monitoring and evaluation processes are underway for both the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) and Energy Price Guarantee (EPG), and further details will be published in due course. Illustrative examples of the level of discount that could be received under the EBRS and EPG have been published on GOV.UK, as well as the unit rate reductions for the EPG scheme for the periods of October to December and January to March. Given the number of different contractual arrangements, range of demand and complexity of the non-domestic market, it would not be practical to undertake a direct comparative analysis between the two schemes.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[94689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of customers with older prepayment meters that redeem energy bills vouchers.

Graham Stuart:

Customers with traditional prepayment meters should have received their first and second Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) discount vouchers. These have been sent by SMS text, email or post.

Suppliers are reporting to BEIS on scheme delivery, including the redemption of traditional prepayment meter vouchers. Data for October indicates all vouchers have been dispatched by suppliers and take up so far is over 60%. The Government will continue to issue communications via a broad range of channels and stakeholders, seeking to increase awareness of the vouchers and how to redeem them and will address any issues identified with redemption.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Julian Sturdy: [\[95837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the risk of claims being made against the UK in the context of the Energy Charter Treaty in the next financial year.

Graham Stuart:

The United Kingdom has investment agreements with Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions with over 90 trading partners, including within the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). There has never been a successful ISDS claim brought against the United Kingdom.

Negotiations have recently been completed to modernise the investment protection and dispute settlement provisions in the ECT. This modernisation seeks to provide greater clarity on the standards of protection afforded to investors and reduce the scope for claims which lack legal merit. The UK is monitoring developments regarding the adoption of the modernised treaty, including the positions of other Contracting Parties.

■ Energy Company Obligation: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [\[97577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes have had ECO scheme measures installed in Sefton Central constituency as of 28 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: BEIS publishes information on the number of households in receipt of ECO measures by Parliamentary Constituency in Table 4.5 accompanying the latest Household Energy Efficiency Statistics release. It is estimated that 4,202 households have had ECO measures installed in Sefton Central constituency up to end September 2022.

■ Energy Efficiency Taskforce

Wera Hobhouse: [\[94837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the details for the Chancellor's Energy Efficiency Taskforce will be published; and whether there will be a consultation on this taskforce.

Graham Stuart:

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

■ Energy Intensive Industries**Rachel Maclean:**[\[94852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of energy prices on the international competitiveness of British energy intensive manufacturing businesses.

Graham Stuart:

Quantitative and qualitative sector level assessment has been carried out as part of a review of the Compensation Scheme for Energy Intensive Industries (EIIIs). Among the outcomes of this assessment was an extension of this scheme for the indirect costs of the UK Emissions Trading System and Carbon Price Support Mechanism for 3 years, with an increased level of aid intensity. This represents more than double the current budget to support EIIIs. Additionally, EIIIs are eligible for support under the Government's current Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

■ Energy: Conservation**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[92062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of launching a public information campaign to reduce energy demand.

Graham Stuart:

A new £18 million public information campaign, launched on Monday 28 November as part of the Government's wider Help for Households campaign, offer technical tips and advice for people to cut their energy use, while also keeping warm this winter.

Alongside Government support like the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bill Support Scheme, the Help for Households website includes actions people can take to save further money on their energy bills such as:

- reducing boiler flow temperature which could save households approximately £100 per year;
- turning down radiators not in use which could save approximately £70 per year; and
- draft-proofing windows and doors which could reduce energy bills by approximately £60 per year.

■ Energy: Expenditure**Dan Carden:**[\[93617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the government has made of the impact of delaying the spend of an additional £6.6bn on

energy efficiency until 2025-28 on (a) energy bills and (b) the cost of support through the Energy Price Guarantee.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has already invested £6.6 billion on decarbonising heat and energy efficiency measures.

The additional £6 billion of new Government funding, announced in the Autumn Statement, will be made available from 2025 to 2028. This provides long-term funding certainty, supporting the growth of supply chains, and ensuring the Government can scale up its delivery over time. This investment is on top of the Government's plan to protect households from high energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee, saving households £900.

■ **Energy: Housing**

Dan Carden:

[\[93616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to (a) encourage and (b) support those on middle incomes to make their homes more energy efficient.

Graham Stuart:

In the Energy White Paper, the Government committed to consult on regulatory measures to improve the energy performance of homes, alongside a package of incentives and supporting policies. This was reaffirmed in the Net Zero Strategy.

The Government will continue to invest in energy efficiency and support homeowners outside such regulations.

Catalysing the market for Green Finance is a priority for Government to help support homeowners not eligible for grants with the upfront costs of improvement.

■ **Energy: Meters**

Dan Carden:

[\[98818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of households that have been remotely switched to prepayment energy meters in the last 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave the Hon. Member for Newport East on 9th November 2022 to Question [75843](#).

Dan Carden:

[\[98824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a ban on energy companies requiring people to move onto prepayment meters in winter 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The energy regulator Ofgem has rules in place that restrict the force-fitting of a prepayment meter on customers who are in debt, except as a last resort.

■ **EURATOM****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[98642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the UK is seeking to re-join Euratom.

Graham Stuart:

The United Kingdom exited Euratom on 31 December 2021, as per the Withdrawal Agreement. The Government has no intention of re-joining either Euratom or the EU and considers the matter of UK membership permanently settled.

The UK negotiated a separate, comprehensive Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with Euratom, which came into effect alongside the Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 31 December 2020, which provides the basis for on-going nuclear cooperation with EU.

■ **Fuels: Prices****Daisy Cooper:**[\[95939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Competition and Markets Authority's road fuel review, published on 12 October 2022, what estimate he has made of time it will take to create an open data scheme through which individual forecourt prices are collected and made available.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave the Hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire on 18 November 2022 to Question [82451](#).

■ **Green Deal Scheme: Sefton Central****Bill Esterson:**[\[97578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many projects have been completed in Sefton Central constituency through the Green Deal as of 24 November 2022.

Bill Esterson:[\[97579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Green Deal projects are classified as live in Sefton Central constituency as of 24 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: BEIS estimates that through the Green Deal, six projects have been completed and 13 projects are classified as live in Sefton Central constituency up to the end of October 2022.

■ Help to Grow Schemes

Daisy Cooper:

[\[95940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will review the eligibility criteria for the Help to Grow Management course; and if he will extend that criteria to include businesses employing between one and four people.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Help to Grow Management course is designed to help SMEs to improve their productivity. It targets businesses with 5-249 employees as the course by its nature requires a reasonable span of leadership and management within the firm for the benefits to be realised.

■ Manufacturing Industries

Jessica Morden:

[\[95813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made a comparative assessment of the (a) decarbonisation needs and (b) costs of industrial processing plants and facilities that are (i) dispersed in location in the UK and (ii) situated within an industrial cluster.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

A comparative analysis of the decarbonisation needs of clustered and dispersed industrial sites is contained in Annex 4 of the [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#). Analysis carried out for the [Net Zero Strategy](#) found that additional private and public investment of at least £14 billion would be needed to achieve the level of emissions reductions required in the industry sector by 2037.

■ Members: Correspondence

Cat Smith:

[\[94784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to the letter of 11 October 2022 from the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood on energy support for off-grid households, reference ZA47153.

Graham Stuart:

I wrote to the hon. Member on 24 November about energy support for off-grid households.

Bill Esterson:

[\[98713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 28 November 2022 from the Federation of Small Business in respect of transparency and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

This Department has not received any correspondence dated 28 November from the Federation for Small Business.

■ Ports: Finance**Ian Levy:** [\[95933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase funding in port infrastructure to help support the development of floating wind supply chains.

Graham Stuart:

The Government understands the importance of ports for the development of floating offshore wind to support the opportunities that this new industry offers the UK. The Government is engaging with stakeholders and analysing feedback following the launch of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme Request for Information earlier this year, and the next steps on the Scheme will be set out soon.

■ Postage Stamps: Fraud**Alexander Stafford:** [\[95985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has held discussions with Royal Mail on the charge of £2.50 made to Rother Valley constituents who have received a letter with a counterfeit stamp attached.

Kevin Hollinrake:

As a private business, the operation of Royal Mail's products and services, including extra postage charges to customers where re-used stamps have been detected, is a matter for the company's management. The Government is not involved in Royal Mail's commercial or operational decisions.

Royal Mail encourages customers that have come into contact with counterfeit stamps, either buying them or on a letter or parcel received in the mail to report it. Information is available on its website at www.royalmail.com/report-stamp-fraud.

■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Huddersfield**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[95777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes that have been retrofitted through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in Huddersfield constituency since the introduction of that fund.

Graham Stuart:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period. The SHDF Demonstrator and Wave 1 awarded a combined total of around £240m of grant funding, including to projects in Yorkshire, but these projects do not include any homes in Huddersfield. The SHDF Wave 2.1 competition, which closed on 18th November 2022, will allocate up to £800m of grant funding, with successful projects likely to be notified in March 2023.

■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Sefton Central**Bill Esterson:** [\[98720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes were retrofitted as a result of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Demonstrator in Sefton Central constituency as of 29 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme does not provide funding to retrofit homes. The scheme provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures in public sector buildings such as hospitals and schools.

■ Supply Chains: Carbon Emissions**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[94682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help businesses decarbonise their supply lines.

Graham Stuart:

The Government currently provides voluntary supply chain (Scope 3) emissions disclosure guidance for UK organisations in the Environmental Reporting Guidelines. The Government is also encouraging small UK businesses to join the 'Race to Zero' – a global effort to achieve Net Zero by 2050. In the Race to Zero, organisations are required to set emission reduction targets which must include Scope 3 emissions. The Government has also publicly outlined, in the Government response to the 'Mandatory climate-related financial disclosures by publicly quoted companies, large private companies and LLPs' consultation, that officials will consider the issue of Scope 3 emission disclosures in due course.

■ Uber Eats: Conditions of Employment and Pay**Sam Tarry:** [\[95975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) rate of pay and (b) employment conditions of Uber Eats drivers.

Sam Tarry: [\[95976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his Department's policy that delivery drivers for (a) Uber Eats and (b) other online food ordering companies should receive the minimum wage.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government actively encourages businesses to treat workers fairly and in accordance with the law. The specific issues raised by the Honourable Member for Ilford South about UberEats and their drivers are internal matters of a private company on which I cannot comment.

An individual's entitlement to employment rights such as the minimum wage are determined by their employment status (employee, limb (b) worker or self-employed). The Government recently published [employment status guidance](#), making it easier for businesses to comply with existing regulations and for individuals to understand which employment protections apply to them.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Navendu Mishra:

[\[97736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that people in receipt of (a) Personal Independence Payment and (b) Higher Rate Mobility Payment also benefit from the Warm Home Discount at their residential address irrespective of whether their name appears on the energy provider's bill and electronic records.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: Households in receipt of means-tested benefits with high energy costs based on certain characteristics of their property are eligible for the rebate. As a result of expanding and reforming the scheme 160,000 more households where a person has a disability or long-term illness will receive a rebate.

The Government's data matching with energy suppliers enables most eligible households to receive their rebates automatically. To be eligible, a person, their partner or their DWP Appointee must be named on the electricity bill or account of a participating supplier on the qualifying date.

■ Warm Homes Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson:

[\[95830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people have received the Warm Homes Discount in Sefton Central constituency, as of 24 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 29 November 2022]: Energy suppliers are responsible for providing rebates to eligible households and are only required to report on the number of rebates provided in England, Scotland and Wales. The Government does not hold data on the number of rebate recipients by constituency.

■ Wind Power

James Wild:

[\[97704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much onshore wind generation capacity (a) is operating, (b) is under construction and (c) has planning permission as of 30 September 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The UK currently has approximately 14.6GW of operational onshore wind capacity. Individual projects under construction and with planning permission awaiting construction are listed in the Renewable Energy Planning Database at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/renewable-energy-planning-database-monthly-extract>.

There are no published aggregated figures for these categories.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Cabinet Office: Departmental Responsibilities****Chi Onwurah:****[98761]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will (a) establish and (b) chair a Cabinet committee on science and technology; and which Minister is responsible for the Office for Investment.

Jeremy Quin:

On 3 November, the Government announced the creation of the National Science and Technology Council as a Cabinet committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to consider matters relating to strategic advantage through science and technology. The membership and terms of reference of the committee can be found on gov.uk.

Lord Johnson, Minister of State for the Department for International Trade, has responsibility for the Office for Investment.

■ Special Advisers: Expenditure**Sam Tarry:****[95959]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much was spent on special advisers appointed from 6 September 2022 to 25 October 2022, including on severance payments.

Jeremy Quin:

Information on Special Adviser numbers and costs, including any severance payments, is published annually by the Cabinet Office in the Annual Report on Special Advisers, as per the requirements of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. The next planned publication of this data will cover the current financial year (1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023) and will be available next year, in accordance with our publication timetable.

DEFENCE**■ Air Force: Training**

John Healey: [\[96574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the average time between completing the WSOp military aviation ground school and commencing the WSOp (MSO) course.

James Heappey:

The Royal Air Force does not have a Weapon System Operator (WSOp) Mission Systems Operator (MSO) course; this training is undertaken in an on-board role on the Voyager by WSOps. WSOp MSO is an aircrew role, and the pre-requisite is completion of the Fixed Wing Air Load Masters course. The average time between completing the Weapon System Operator Military Aviation Ground School to starting the Fixed Wing Air Load Masters course during the past 12 months is 24 Weeks.

John Healey: [\[96575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is between graduating from RAF officer training and starting phase 2 weapons system officer training.

James Heappey:

The average time between graduating from Royal Air Force Modular Initial Office Training to commencing Weapon System Officer training during the past 12 months is 13 weeks.

John Healey: [\[96576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is between completing the weapons system officer military aviation ground school and beginning the weapons system officer lead-in course.

James Heappey:

The Royal Air Force does not have a Weapon System Officer (WSO) Lead-In course. A pre-requisite for the WSO role is completion of the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Foundation course. The average time between completing the Military Aviation Ground School to starting the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Foundation course during the past 12 months is 10 Weeks.

John Healey: [\[96577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is between completing the Weapon Systems Operator lead-in course and beginning the ISTAR operational conversion unit.

James Heappey:

The Royal Air Force does not have a Weapon System Operator (WSOp) lead-in course. A pre-requisite for the WSOp role is completion of the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Foundation course. The average time taken from completion of the ISR Foundation course to starting the Intelligence,

Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Operational Conversion Unit during the past 12 months is 60 Weeks.

John Healey: [\[96578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is between completing the Weapon Systems Officers pipeline (ALM) course and beginning the (a) Atlas and (b) C-17 operational conversion course.

James Heappey:

Royal Air Force Weapon System Officers are streamed into Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance roles only on completion of their training in the Military Flying Training System.

The average time during the past 12 months for Weapon System Operators (Non-Commissioned Officers) streamed onto the Atlas and C-17 Operational Conversion Units after completion of the Air Load Masters course is:

Atlas - 36 Weeks

C-17 - 42 Weeks

John Healey: [\[96579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is between completing the Weapon Systems Officers pipeline (MSO) course and beginning the Voyager operational conversion unit.

James Heappey:

The RAF does not have a specific Mission System Operator course; this is an on-board role undertaken on the Voyager by Weapon System Operators (Non-Commissioned Officers).

The average time during the past 12 months for Weapon System Operators (Non-Commissioned Officers) streamed onto Voyager Operational Conversion Unit after completion of the Air Load Masters course is 19 Weeks.

Royal Air Force Weapon System Officers are streamed into Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance roles only on completion of their training in the Military Flying Training System.

■ Armed Forces: Discharges

Rachel Hopkins: [\[96672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will commission an independent review into the medical discharge process in the armed forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The medical discharge process is delegated to the single Services to afford each branch of the Armed Forces the necessary flexibility to respond effectively to the unique and varying environments in which their people are employed. While each of

the single Services' medical discharge process is subject to regular review, Defence has no plans to commission an independent review.

■ **AWACS: Procurement**

John Healey:

[\[98665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 44 of the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-2032, published in November 2022, and to line 17 of his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data March 2022, whether he now expects a smaller saving from the decision to reduce the number of E-7 Wedgetails purchased by his Department.

Alex Chalk:

The figures from the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-32 and the Government Major Projects Portfolio Data refer to different sets of data. There has been no substantive reduction in the forecast savings from the reduced number of aircraft.

■ **China: Armed Forces**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[93482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of RAF personnel who have been involved in training the Chinese Armed Forces without permission in the last ten years.

James Heapey:

The Department does not have an estimate of the number of RAF personnel who have been involved in training the Chinese Armed Forces in the last ten years. The issue only came to light in 2019, when the Ministry of Defence (MOD) became aware of an isolated case, when a UK defence industry employee was head-hunted to support the Peoples Republic of China military aviation programmes. Since then, the MOD have investigated other cases, and when practicable taken necessary measures to deter and dissuade such recruitment. Up to 30 UK former serving pilots are believed to be currently providing training to Chinese Armed Forces Personnel.

■ **Defence**

John Healey:

[\[98664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to publish an updated Defence and Security Industrial Strategy after publication of the refresh of the Integrated Review and an updated Defence Command Paper.

Alex Chalk:

Events since the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) was published and the UK's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine have reinforced the key themes of the DSIS - the need to consider industry as a capability in its own right, and closer and earlier dialogue with industry.

We will review the DSIS alongside the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper refresh and will decide as part of that process whether a new publication is warranted.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 95799 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts, whether the contractual obligations include the delivery of UK content.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 22 November 2022 to Question number 89736 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey).

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Belfast [UIN 89736.docx]

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to answer Question 94706, tabled on 23 November 2022, on whether quality assurance testing for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract will be undertaken by UK officials in Spain before blocks are transferred to the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence will have full access to witness and inspect the blocks built in Spain for the purposes of Quality Assurance and will have a dedicated build inspection team in place to undertake assurance and audit at each stage of build, irrespective of location.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[98697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Spokesperson's comments on 22 November 2022 and Question 94716, how many Spanish shipbuilding experts will be resident at Harland and Wolff; and whether the Spanish shipbuilding experts resident at Harland and Wolff have been included in the 1200 shipbuilding jobs figure released by the Department.

Alex Chalk:

On current plans, 37 Spanish shipbuilding experts will be resident at Harland & Wolff. These experts are not included in the 1,200 jobs expected to be created by the manufacture of the Fleet Solid Support ships.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Shipbuilding

Chris Evans: [\[98704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 3 November 2022 to Question 61035 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Shipbuilding, if he will include an

enforceable clause in the contract requiring that a significant proportion of the build work for the Fleet Solid Support manufacturing contract will be completed in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 November 2022 to Question number 95799 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones).

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts [UIN 95799.docx]

■ **Helicopters: Training**

John Healey:

[\[96571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the average time between completing the WSOp (Crewman) course and beginning the (a) Chinook OCU, and (b) Puma OCU.

James Heappey:

The average time between completing the Weapon System Operator Crewman course to starting the platform specific Operational Conversion Unit during the past 12 months is:

Chinook - 45 Weeks

Puma - 19 Weeks

■ **Military Aid**

John Healey:

[\[93463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 86666 on Military Aid, if he will provide details of each of the 63 approved Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests to include (a) their task; (b) how many Armed Forces personnel were involved; (c) when they began and (d) when they ended or are due to end.

James Heappey:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 17 November 2022 to Question 86646.

Attachments:

1. Military Aid [UIN 86646.docx]

■ **Oman: Military Exercises**

John Healey:

[\[96566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has taken recent steps to protect troops deployed on Exercise Desert Khanjar from heat illness.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

As high temperatures were expected for Exercise Desert Khanjar, the Army applied Defence-wide health and safety risk management policies from the outset.

This included (but was not limited to) all personnel undertaking mandatory heat injury prevention training to ensure awareness at all levels and undergoing a full period of acclimatisation on arrival in Oman.

All activities are regularly reviewed and, where necessary, adapted to ensure training objectives are still achieved safely.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

John Healey: [\[93460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the announcement on the provision of 125 anti-aircraft guns to Ukraine on 19 November 2022, what type of anti-aircraft guns will be supplied as part of that package of support.

James Heappey:

We will provide Ukraine with 125 towed anti-aircraft guns as part of the package of support announced on 19 November 2022. Precise details remain commercially sensitive at this time.

We continue to work closely with Ukraine to source a range of equipment which they can deploy rapidly and effectively in their battle against Russian aggression. This includes both NATO and non-NATO standard equipment and munitions.

■ **Veterans: Cost of Living**

John Healey: [\[98663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Disability Cost of Living payments were processed by Veterans UK in each year since 2010; and what the total cost of these payments was.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Disability Cost of Living Payment is a Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) led one-off payment of £150 that came into effect in September 2022.

As at 30 November 2022 a total of 5,323 Disability Cost of Living payments of £150 have been made by Veterans UK to veterans who are in receipt of a qualifying Ministry of Defence (MOD) disability benefit only. The total amount paid is therefore £798,450.

Please note that if a Veteran is in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit from the MOD and a qualifying disability benefit from DWP, they will get a Disability Cost of Living Payment from DWP only.

■ **Veterans: Disability Aids**

Rachel Hopkins: [\[96670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of changing his Department's policy to allow veterans regardless of how long they have spent out of the armed forces to access specialist wheelchairs and other orthotic

equipment through the Defence Medical Services if their injuries are attributable to their service.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The responsibility for veterans' healthcare, including the provision of specialist wheelchairs and orthotic equipment, is primarily the responsibility of the National Health Service in England and the Devolved Administrations. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has not made an assessment of changing MOD policy to allow veterans to access specialist wheelchairs and other orthotic equipment through the Defence Medical Services.

Where injury is directly attributable to an individual's time in service (irrespective of how long since they left the Armed Forces), the Veterans Trauma Network is an NHS service that provides specialist care and support, so veterans are not waiting longer than necessary to access the treatment they need. This includes ensuring veterans have access to appropriate equipment to meet their clinical needs.

In addition, in England, the NHS has a range of equipment available for those who need it, following an assessment of clinical need. The mobility equipment provided through the NHS is readily available and appropriate to meet the clinical needs experienced by veterans. There is an increasing amount of bespoke NHS support for veterans, such as Personal Health Budgets for Wheelchairs.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Cultural Heritage

Nickie Aiken:

[\[902508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to widen access to culture and heritage.

James Daly:

[\[902512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to widen access to culture and heritage.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is committed to ensuring as many people as possible can access our world-class museums, galleries and heritage sites, regardless of their background or where they live. Our Arm's-Length Bodies deliver much of this good work.

For example, following a request from HM Government to ensure that the taxpayer subsidy it allocates is more equitably spread around the country, Arts Council England will be investing £446 million each year in 2023-2026 to support 990 organisations across the whole of England. This is more than ever before, and in more places than ever before.

■ Islamic Centre of England and Islamic Human Rights Commission

Theresa Villiers: [\[98754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to support the Charity Commission with its investigation of Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and the Islamic Centre of England.

Stuart Andrew:

The Charity Commission has opened a Statutory Inquiry into Islamic Centre of England. The Charity Commission does not have a statutory inquiry open into Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust.

By law, the Charity Commission carries out its functions independently of ministerial or government control. DCMS has no involvement in Charity Commission casework.

■ Islamic Centre of England and Islamic Human Rights Commission: Finance

Theresa Villiers: [\[98755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether any public funding has been allocated to the (a) Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and (b) Islamic Centre of England in each of the last five years.

Theresa Villiers: [\[98756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy to provide no public funds to the (a) Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and (b) Islamic Centre of England.

Stuart Andrew:

DCMS has provided no funding to the (a) Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and (b) Islamic Centre of England in each of the last five years.

DCMS does not hold records of wider public funding to charities. Certain charities are required to submit a trustees annual report and annual accounts which are published by the Charity Commission. These may include information on government funding received by a charity. This information is publicly available in their entry on the register.

DCMS has robust processes in place for the use of public money to ensure value for money to the taxpayer. Effective due diligence identifies risks that inform the department's funding decisions.

■ Islamic Human Rights Commission: Iran

Theresa Villiers: [\[98753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of potential links between the Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and the Iranian Government.

Stuart Andrew:

DCMS has not made an assessment of potential links between the Islamic Human Rights Commission Trust and the Iranian Government. However, charities must be independent bodies and must not exist for the purpose of implementing the policies of a governmental authority or carrying out the directions of a governmental body. Further information on the independence of charities from the state can be found in the Charity Commission's guidance: RR7 - The independence of Charities from the State on the GOV.UK website.

The Charity Commission is an independent registrar and regulator of charities in England and Wales, the Charity Commission performs a vital service on behalf of the public. The Commission is not subject to Ministerial or Government direction or control.

EDUCATION■ **Children: Research****Geraint Davies:**[\[98647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to Action for Children's research entitled Let's talk about it: Insights from Action for Children's Parent Talk Service, published in November 2022, what assessment her Department has made of the potential implications for its policies of that research.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is aware of the research carried out by Action for Children's Parent Talk Service and the recommendations it sets out for the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. This includes strengthening accountability measures to ensure that every child and young person has access to support that meets their needs.

The SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper sets out our proposals for how we will improve the SEND system, so that it delivers improved outcomes, improved experiences and financial sustainability.

The green paper consultation closed on 22 July 2022. The department is currently reviewing the feedback received and using this, along with continued engagement with the system, to inform the next stage of delivering improvements for children, young people and their families. The department is committed to publishing a full response to the green paper in an Improvement Plan early in 2023.

■ **Financial Services: Education****Alex Cunningham:**[\[98715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to provide young people with education on credit products.

Alex Cunningham:

[98716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to provide young people with education on buy-now-pay-later schemes.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information where needed.

Financial education is included in the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 but can be taught by all schools at all Key Stages. Pupils should be taught the functions and uses of money, the importance of personal budgeting, money management, and managing financial risk. At secondary school, pupils should be educated on income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and the need to understand financial risk, including any emerging financial trends. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>.

The mathematics curriculum includes a strong emphasis on the essential arithmetic that primary pupils should be taught. A strong grasp of mathematics will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money.

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) published financial education guidance for primary and secondary schools in England in November 2021, to support school leaders to enhance their financial education provision. The guidance is available at: <https://maps.org.uk/2021/11/11/financial-education-guidance-for-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england/>. This guidance includes links to quality assured resources for schools, including content and activities on cryptocurrencies and buy now, pay later schemes. It also sets out the knowledge pupils need to protect their personal data, critically evaluate online content and identify scams.

The Department is working with MaPS on a series of joint financial education webinars during the 2022/23 academic year to help both primary and secondary schools, to improve pupils' knowledge and build teachers' confidence in this area.

■ Financial Services: Primary Education

Alex Cunningham:

[98718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the addition of financial education to the primary school national curriculum.

Alex Cunningham:

[98719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential disparities in (a) access to and (b) quality of financial education in primary schools.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information when needed.

The primary school curriculum includes financial education within mathematics, which provides young people with the knowledge to make important financial decisions. A strong grasp of mathematics will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, using percentages. The mathematics curriculum also includes specific content on financial education, such as calculations with money.

Primary schools can teach financial education through citizenship. Although this is not part of the National Curriculum until Key Stage 3, the Department has published a non-statutory citizenship curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2, to support schools to ensure that pupils are taught how to look after their money and realise that future wants and needs may be met through saving. There is also a wide range of resources available for schools, including the Money and Pension Service's (MaPS) financial education guidance for primary and secondary schools in England. This can be found here: <https://maps.org.uk/2021/11/11/financial-education-guidance-for-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england/>.

The Department does not monitor financial education in primary schools but continues to work with MaPS and HM Treasury to consider the evidence and explore opportunities to promote the importance of financial education to schools.

■ Foster Care: Finance**Helen Hayes:****[98805]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of national minimum fostering allowances and whether they adequately reflect the costs of looking after a fostered child.

Helen Hayes:**[98806]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the national minimum fostering allowance will be increased in line with inflation.

Claire Coutinho:

The Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, issued by the department under the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA), set out the expectations that are placed on foster parents and their agencies. The department is clear that no one should suffer financially because of their fostering role and we expect all foster parents to receive at least the national minimum allowance (NMA), plus any agreed expenses to cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with them.

The NMA is updated annually, with the next update to come into effect in April 2023.

Foster carers also receive Qualifying Care Relief that is made up of two parts, tax exemption on the first £10,000 shared equally among any foster carers in the same household and tax relief for every week a child is in their care.

■ Free School Meals

Munira Wilson: [\[98899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children who are eligible for free school meals but who have not applied for them.

Nick Gibb:

The latest published statistics show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming benefits related free school meals (FSM). This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, over one third of pupils receive a free meal in school.

The Department's last estimate is that take up is around 89% of those who are entitled.

The Department provided an Eligibility Checking System to make the checking process as quick and straightforward as possible for schools and Local Authorities. The Department has also developed a model registration form to help schools encourage parents to sign up for FSM and provided guidance to Jobcentre Plus advisers so that they can make Universal Credit recipients aware that they may also be entitled to wider benefits, including FSM.

■ Higher Education: Misrepresentation

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking to help stop the mis-selling of university courses to young people.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[95784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to regulate how universities (a) advertise and (b) sell their university courses to prevent mis-selling to students.

Robert Halfon:

Universities are responsible for their own advertising. The Competition and Markets Authority has produced guidance to the sector on their responsibilities under consumer protection law, including what material information about courses they should provide prospective students. A new partnership, announced on 24 November, between the higher education (HE) regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), and National Trading Standards includes tackling misleading precontract information that students rely on when choosing their course. We are also working with the sector to agree ways in which they might incorporate key pieces of data into their course advertising, so that students better understand what outcomes they might expect from courses at the point at which courses are being sold to them.

The department is clear that universities should be transparent about the content of their courses and the likely outcomes that students can expect from them. Discover Uni is a tool, which is owned and operated by the four UK HE funding and regulatory

bodies. It is the official, authoritative source of information and guidance to HE courses in the UK and is designed to help prospective students make the right choices about what and where to study, by allowing users to search for and compare information and data for individual undergraduate courses across the UK. The OfS sets the expectation that HE providers will display a link to the Discover Uni website on their course website pages to help prospective students make informed decisions about the courses they sign-up to.

■ Higher Education: Standards

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure university league table competition works in the best interests of students.

Robert Halfon:

The department does not have a role in the compiling of university league tables. They are the responsibility of the newspapers that compile and publish them.

■ Higher Education: Young People

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure young people are supported in choosing the type of undergraduate qualification and courses suitable to their needs.

Robert Halfon:

The department is funding careers in schools and colleges through the Careers and Enterprise Company with up to £30.6 million during the financial year 2022/23, to support them to implement the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Careers Guidance. The Gatsby Benchmarks provide a framework for the delivery of high-quality careers guidance. This includes encounters with further and higher education to help all pupils understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them.

Young people aged 13 and above can also access direct careers advice through the National Careers Service via a dedicated helpline and webchat, as well as through a national website. The government is also delivering the 'Get the Jump' campaign, designed to promote the full range of post-16 and post-18 education and training opportunities available to young people.

■ Schools: Closures

Geraint Davies:

[\[98655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Education Endowment Fund's report Impact of Key Stage 1 school closures on later attainment and social skills, a longitudinal study, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of that report's findings.

Nick Gibb:

The Education Endowment Foundation published its report on the impact of Key Stage 1 school closures in November 2022. It continues an ongoing longitudinal study looking at current attainment in reading and mathematics, as well as the development of social skills, for pupils who were in reception and Year 1 during the 2019/20 academic year. The Department welcomes the contribution this work has made to its understanding of several of the key issues around pupil wellbeing and attainment following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Extended school closures during the pandemic meant that many children and young people missed out on face to face education. After two years of disruption due to the pandemic, the Department returned to a full programme of primary assessments in 2022. At Key Stage 1, attainment fell in all subjects compared to 2019.

Helping children recover from the effects of the pandemic is one of the Department's main priorities. The Department has made available almost £5 billion for a comprehensive recovery package to support children and young people to make up for education lost during the pandemic.

For children in their Reception year, the Department has funded the Nuffield Early Language Intervention, improving the language skills of Reception age children who need it most following the pandemic. The programme targets children needing extra support with their speech and language development and is proven to help them make around three months of additional progress.

In addition, many of the Department's recovery programmes have and can be used to tackle attendance and behaviour, deliver social and emotional support, and provide enrichment elements that support physical and mental health and wellbeing, as well as academic support.

■ Schools: Finance**Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[98654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to ensure that schools whose budgets are determined by the minimum funding formula benefit from the additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement; and if she will make a statement.

Ian Byrne:[\[98920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the additional funding for education announced in the Autumn Statement 2022, whether that funding will be provided in the form of (a) one or (b) multiple annual grants.

Nick Gibb:

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

■ Schools: Gender Recognition

Mark Jenkinson:

[\[98784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answers of 9 November 2022 to Questions 79339 and 79340 on Schools: Gender Recognition, if she will provide a separate Answer to Question 79339.

Nick Gibb:

The Department knows that issues around gender can be sensitive for schools. The Department expects schools to prioritise individual pupils' wellbeing in these matters. Schools are responsible for making decisions in line with their legal duties, but the circumstances of each case will differ, and the Department cannot comment on individual cases.

The current service specification for the Gender Identity Development Service states that referrals can be made by staff in schools and colleges. NHSE are currently consulting on a new interim service specification, and one of the proposed changes is that referrals may be made by GPs and NHS professionals only.

The Department is currently engaging with a range of stakeholders to develop guidance for schools, including the Department of Health and Social Care and NHSE. The Department will also consider the outcomes of Dr Cass's independent review, so that its guidance is aligned with policy across Government to ensure children and young people get the best possible support. The Department will be undertaking a full public consultation on the draft guidance before publishing in 2023.

■ Special Educational Needs

Kate Osamor:

[\[97656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs were awaiting a school place in mainstream education in each year from 2010 to 2022.

Claire Coutinho:

The department does not collect data on how many children with an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs are waiting for school places in mainstream education.

Each January, the department collects data from local authorities, covering the number of children and young people and the type of provision attended. This includes mainstream schools, special schools, alternative provision, pupils educated elsewhere, and those 'awaiting provision'. This is the provision set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plan. This is published annually and details can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

The department does not collect data about the specific circumstances of the children and young people 'awaiting provision'. The department knows that this category includes children and young people in a wide range of circumstances, including some

who are in an education setting, but awaiting provision in another setting, and some who have only recently moved into the area.

Local authorities must also have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of the mainstream state-funded schools in its area, to ensure that, for in year admissions, unplaced children without an EHC Plan, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible.

■ Students: Finance

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[95785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help students make sustainable financial decisions when at university.

Robert Halfon:

The department has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) and Student Minds to provide Student Space, a mental health and wellbeing online platform designed to bridge any gaps in support for students, which will work alongside existing services. Student Space provides advice and information on student finances, including advice on how to budget whilst at university. This service can be found here:

<https://studentspace.org.uk/wellbeing/how-to-make-a-student-budget>.

Student Space is funded with up to £3.6 million by the OfS and the HE Funding Council Wales. It has now received a funding commitment of £262,500 annually for three years to extend this provision of online mental health and wellbeing support to all students in England and Wales until 2026.

This online platform is complemented by a wide range of budgeting advice available directly from Higher Education (HE) providers, as well as other sources online.

The department has also made £261 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged HE students who need additional help. The department has worked with the OfS to ensure universities support students in hardship using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

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

The government is reviewing options for uprating maximum loans and grants for the 2023/24 academic year and an announcement will follow shortly.

■ University of Sussex: Freedom of Expression

Tim Loughton:

[98643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the status is of the Office for Students (OfS) investigation into academic freedoms at Sussex University and free speech

launched in November 2021; and when the OfS will publish the findings of that investigation.

Claire Coutinho:

As the regulator for higher education in England, the Office for Students is an independent public body. Any investigations that they conduct are a matter for them and it is not for the department to provide comment.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill includes a range of measures aimed at protecting and promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education in England. In particular, it introduces a new complaints route for staff, members, students and visiting speakers, to be operated by the OfS, and creates a new statutory tort, enabling individuals to seek legal redress in the courts for loss they have suffered as a result of breaches of the specified duties.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Environment Agency

Tim Farron:

[\[78667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the budget for the Environment Agency has been in each year since 2015.

Rebecca Pow:

The following table sets out the budgets for the Environment Agency from 2015-16 to date. Budgets quoted represent those budgets agreed with HM Treasury and included in Main and Supplementary Estimates. They represent budgets funded by grant in aid and are net of any external funding.

	£'000							
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
DEL	963,385	1,035,193	911,017	899,146	973,688	1,271,096	1,242,695	1,205,318

DEL Budgets are Delegated Expenditure Limits that are set in Spending Reviews. They include expenditure which is generally considered to be within the department's control and can be managed with fixed multi-year limits.

■ Food: Waste

Alex Sobel:

[\[95923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date his Department plans to publish the results of the consultation on improved reporting of food waste by large food businesses in England.

Rebecca Pow:

We recently consulted on options to improve reporting of food waste volumes by large food businesses in England. By increasing the number of businesses measuring and publicly reporting their food waste, we expect to drive action to reduce it. We are analysing responses to the consultation and look to publish a summary of responses and government response in 2023.

Hygiene: Waste Disposal

David Linden: [\[95918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 38365, to provide (a) the reason for the further delay in publication; and (b) a revised publication timescale of the final report of the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable absorbent hygiene products; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Work on the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable nappies is nearly complete and peer review of the work is being finalised. No date has been set for publication.

OFWAT

Tim Farron: [\[78669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the budget for Ofwat has been in each year since 2015.

Rebecca Pow:

The requested information is publicly available in Ofwat's Annual Reports and Accounts and links to each report are provided below:

2020-2021 - [Ofwat-Annual-report-and-accounts-2020-2021.pdf](#)

2019-2020 - [Water-Services-Regulation-Authority-Ofwat_Annual-report-and-accounts-2019-20.pdf](#)

2018-2019 – [Ofwat annual report and accounts 2018 to 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2017-2018 - [Annual report and accounts 2017 to 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2016-2017 – [Ofwat annual report accounts 2016-2017 web version \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2015-2016 - [Ofwat annual report and accounts 2015_16 sign final post EU](#)

River Wandle: Sewage

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[72402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times raw sewage has been released into the River Wandle in the past 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

This government has increased monitoring requirements on water companies to ensure greater transparency, requiring them to have event duration monitors on all Combined Sewer Overflows to enable spill counting. An annual report, which includes the number and duration of spills that occurred on the River Wandle in 2021, is available here: [Defra Data Services Platform](#)

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences****Sarah Champion:****[97549]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference 2022, who his Department invited to that conference; and for reason parliamentary specialist staff were unable to attend that conference virtually or in person.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Representatives of nearly 100 countries were invited to this two-day conference in London to drive forward urgent action to tackle the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. We have sought to put survivors of this abhorrent crime at the centre of the global response. A wide range of survivors attended and participated actively. Invitees included government ministers, the United Nations and civil society organisations from across the globe alongside the Countess of Wessex, the International Criminal Court prosecutor Karim Khan, and Nadia Murad and Dr Denis Mukwege - joint Nobel Peace Prize winners - for their work to combat sexual violence. A wide range of parliamentarians were also invited to the conference and engaged extensively. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon briefed the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the United Nations (UN) All Party Parliamentary Groups ahead of the conference last week.

■ Bahrain: Elections**Kenny MacAskill:****[92359]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department funded programmes in Bahrain through the Gulf Strategy Fund which supported preparations for the parliamentary elections held in Bahrain in November 2022.

David Rutley:

The UK Government did not fund programmes to support preparation for parliamentary elections in Bahrain in 2022.

■ BBC Persian Service: Finance**Afzal Khan:** [\[95931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of trends in the level of funding for BBC Persian Radio on access to impartial news and information for people in Iran.

David Rutley:

The FCDO strongly values the BBC World Service's role in bringing high-quality and impartial broadcasting to audiences in need. Under recent BBC proposals, whilst radio broadcasts for BBC Persian will cease, TV broadcasting will continue and investment in digital services will increase, reflecting audience viewing trends. In Iran, only 1% of the BBC's total weekly audience of 13.8 million access BBC news solely via radio - the other 99% use BBC Persian on TV and online.

The UK is a fierce champion of media freedom and proud member of the Media Freedom Coalition. We regularly raise the issue of the Iranian peoples' right to access independent media, including BBC Persian, and unrestricted internet with the Iranian government, as well as in multilateral fora.

■ Brazil: Crime Prevention**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[97503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what he has had discussions with his Brazilian counterpart on reports that seven people were killed and eight injured by gunshots, including two police officers, in anti-crime operations carried out by Brazil's Civil and Military Police on 25 November 2022 in Rio de Janeiro's North Zone.

David Rutley:

We are aware of and continue to monitor reports of violence in Brazil. The UK is clear about our position on the importance of accountable democratic institutions, the rule of law and the safeguarding of human rights. We continue to raise the importance of adherence to the respecting of human rights in the carrying out of security operations when engaging with the Brazilian Government, political parties and civil society organisations.

■ Development Aid: Tuberculosis**Chris Law:** [\[95856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the World Health Organisation's 2022 Global Tuberculosis Report.

Chris Law: [\[95857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure TB is eradicated globally by 2030 in line with SDG 3.3.2.

Chris Law: [\[95858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to bilaterally facilitate the eradication to TB globally.

Chris Law: [\[95859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the steps his Department can take to help tackle the increase in the number of people dying from TB globally as outlined in the World Health Organisation's 2022 Global Tuberculosis Report.

Chris Law: [\[95861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to provide funding for international programmes to help support people with tuberculosis with the high costs they incur as a consequence of that illness.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The World Health Organisation's 2022 Global Tuberculosis Report estimates that 10.6 million people fell ill with TB in 2021, a 4.5 per cent increase from the previous year. The number of people dying from TB rose from 1.5 to 1.6 million, the second successive yearly rise. The report also shows a 3 per cent increase in the burden of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), with 450,000 new cases of rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) in 2021. These increases follow many years of sustained progress to reduce the burden of TB and reflect the impact of COVID-19 on country health systems.

The UK Government supports the World Health Organisation's End TB strategy towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 target to end the epidemic of tuberculosis by 2030. The UK's £1 billion pledge for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria's seventh replenishment will help the Global Fund and its partners provide TB treatment and care for 1.1 million people, screen 20 million people for TB, and provide 42,000 people with treatment for multidrug-resistant TB. In addition to this the Government also supports research and development in to new tools, evidence and medicine to combat TB; catalytic interventions to bring down prices of new products and tackle barriers to widespread access to TB diagnostics and treatments; and provides bilateral support to TB endemic countries to strengthen their health systems.

■ Development Aid: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the price per dose was for surplus vaccine donations in 2021 as of August 2022.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In 2021 the UK donated 30.8m doses of Astra Zeneca Covid-19 vaccines to countries in need. We reported ODA expenditure in line with 2021 OECD-DAC guidance. The UK contract with Astra Zeneca is no profit no loss so the final dose price will only be

settled once all relevant expenditures have been taken into account. The August 2022 estimate of £3.36 per dose was the best available at the time the statistics on vaccine donations were compiled. Should there be further changes to the price per dose, we will review these in line with the revisions policy.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021440/FCDO-Revisions-Policy.pdf

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Security

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any security concerns were raised with Ministers about the use of personal (a) devices and (b) emails for confidential Government business in each of the last five years.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[95898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many security briefings did Ministers in her Department attend on (a) protecting their personal data and (b) mitigating cyber threats, in each of the past five years.

David Rutley:

FCDO Security Officials brief Ministers as soon as possible after their arrival into the Department on a range of physical, information, personnel and cyber threats, reflecting the latest Cabinet Office guidance and FCDO specific issues. Historically, additional briefings were provided when required but we are planning to move to a more structured annual briefing cycle. Each Private Office has a nominated security lead who is responsible for ensuring that emerging security threats are understood and mitigated.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Travel

Mr David Lammy: [\[95769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much has been spent on Ministerial travel by helicopter in each year since 2012.

Mr David Lammy: [\[95774\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on private charter flights in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-senior-officials-business-expenses-and-hospitality-april-to-june-2022>.

Historic transparency data detailing ministerial overseas travel and senior officials' travel costs for the Department for International Development can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-with-external-organisations-in-the-department-for-international-development> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dfid-senior-executives-business-expenses-gifts-travel-and-meetings>.

Similarly, ministerial overseas travel and senior officials' travel costs for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/minister-data#2011> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/pus-data>.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Written Questions

Mr David Lammy:

[\[95767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he will respond to Questions 88789, 88788 and 88787 submitted by the Rt. Hon. Member for Tottenham on 16 November 2022.

David Rutley:

Replies to these 3 questions from the Honourable Member were issued on 29 November.

■ Iraq: Kurds

Jack Lopresti:

[\[94736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the infringement by Iran on the sovereignty of the Kurdistan region of Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The UK condemns the continued attacks by Iran of areas in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Iran must cease its indiscriminate bombardment of Kurdish towns which has led to the loss of innocent lives and damaged civilian infrastructure. These attacks are a violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and are wholly unacceptable. They demonstrate a repeated pattern of Iranian destabilising activity in the region. The UK has condemned Iranian infringement of Iraqi sovereignty alongside likeminded partners at the United Nations Security Council. The UK remains committed to the security and sovereignty of Iraq and will continue to work with the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government to ensure this.

Members: Correspondence**Afzal Khan:** [\[98835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to reply to correspondence from the hon. member for Manchester, Gorton, dated 5 October 2022, reference AK55505.

David Rutley:

We apologise for the delay in replying to the Hon. Member. A reply will be sent as soon as possible.

Pakistan: Environment Protection**Sam Tarry:** [\[95967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to increase aid for environmental protection programmes in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

At COP26, the UK pledged £55 million to help Pakistan develop climate resilience, manage water more sustainably and unlock climate investment. The UK government regularly engages with the Pakistan government on climate change and environmental protection. On 14 October, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, met with Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change, Sherry Rahman, to discuss how the UK can best help Pakistan mitigate the long-term effects of climate change.

Pakistan: Floods**Sam Tarry:** [\[95968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the £1.5 million allocated to help respond to flooding in Pakistan on the people impacted by that flooding.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has pledged a total of £26.5 million of UK aid to support the flood relief effort in Pakistan. The £1.5 million initial allocation is responding to people's immediate needs. Through our partners in Pakistan, this funding has provided: 16,125 households with multi-purpose cash assistance, 65,403 affected people with medical consultations through mobile medical camps, 33,950 people with water filtration cubes, and 46,752 people with hygiene services. During his recent visit to Pakistan, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister for South Asia, visited some of Pakistan's worst flood-affected areas, to see the critical role played by UK aid.

■ Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Lee Anderson: [\[94861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of reports of Palestinian Islamic Jihad activity in the Palestinian Authority.

David Rutley:

We continue to closely monitor the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK has proscribed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as a terrorist entity since March 2001. PIJ and other terrorist groups must cease all actions that are violent or provocative, or that put civilian lives at risk. The UK continues to provide the Palestinian Authority (PA) with professional support in helping develop its security institutions. This provision includes training and other technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Interior and PA Security Forces (PASF), to support the development of capable, responsible security forces that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people.

■ Russia: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Venezuela

Andrew Percy: [\[94728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has been made of reports that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran is coordinating with Venezuela to provide Shahed-136 drones to Russia.

David Rutley:

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, whether direct or indirect, 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. The UK is following cooperation between Iran and Venezuela closely and will continue to stand up for UK values and security interests, and those of our partners.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights

Sam Tarry: [\[95969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) he or (b) officials in his Department have had recent discussions with Lieutenant General Vikum Liyanage on human rights and protestors in Sri Lanka.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK carefully considers all our engagement with the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, aiming to support the development of a modern, professional and human rights compliant military. Promoting adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights compliance is integral to this engagement. We continuously monitor the context

and viability of our approach to ensure that assistance is in line with our values and is consistent with our human rights obligations.

The then Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out our concerns regarding human rights and security responses to peaceful protests when he spoke with President Wickremesinghe in July.

■ **Syria: Turkey**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[97648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Turkey on (a) assaults in the regions of North and East Syria and (b) the possibility of an invasion in those regions.

Leo Docherty:

We are closely monitoring the situation in northern Syria. FCDO Ministers and senior officials engage with Turkey regularly on regional security and stability. The Foreign Secretary met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on 30 November in the margins of the NATO Foreign Ministerial.

■ **Tigray: Maternal Mortality and Neonatal Mortality**

Naz Shah: [\[95868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce levels of (a) maternal mortality and (b) neonatal mortality in Tigray, Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In the last eighteen months the UK has provided nearly £90 million of life-saving aid to communities across Ethiopia affected by crises. This included the delivery of medical equipment to improve basic obstetric and neonatal care for 10 hospitals in Tigray, and providing capacity building on emergency obstetric and neonatal care for 120 health systems managers and frontline health workers in Tigray. We have also prioritised nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women and children under five in Tigray, given the strong link between undernutrition and maternal and child mortality.

■ **Tuberculosis**

Chris Law: [\[95862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he will be representing the Government at the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on TB in September 2023.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK welcomes the UN High Level Meeting on TB in September 2023 and is aiming for a successful outcome that supports achieving the Sustainable

Development Goal target on TB. No decision has yet been made on UK Government representation. This will be confirmed in advance of the High Level Meeting.

■ Tuberculosis: Medical Treatments

Chris Law: [\[95860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of new tools and medicines to tackle the global TB epidemic.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government through FCDO supports research and development for diseases of poverty such as Tuberculosis (TB) through Product Development Partnerships. This includes funding of £56.4 million to the TB Alliance since 2017. TB Alliance has developed novel treatment regimen that are shorter, safer and more effective including for multi-drug resistant strains of TB. Additionally, FCDO support to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics has helped to develop novel diagnostics for TB including the GenXpert technology to diagnose resistant TB in under 4 hours now in use in over 140 countries globally.

■ Zimbabwe: Human Rights

Dan Carden: [\[98825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of human rights violations in Zimbabwe.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Zimbabwe is one of the UK's 31 Human Rights Priority Countries. We acknowledge some areas of progress, including the repeal of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the launch of Zimbabwe's national disability policy. The UK is monitoring the human rights situation in Zimbabwe and has engaged the Government of Zimbabwe on allowing space for political opposition and civil society organisations to operate freely in the run-up to elections in 2023. As the British Ambassador to Zimbabwe publicly stated on 2 October, the UK is committed to the fundamental rights to peaceful assembly, association and due process enshrined in Zimbabwe's constitution.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Breast Cancer

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[95907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent comparative assessment his Department has made of (a) the number of patients commencing breast cancer treatments and (b) the number of breast cancer cases identified at breast cancer screening appointments in each of the last five years.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Cancer: Diagnosis****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[98874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS patients were waiting for diagnosis following testing for cancer as of 29 September 2022.

Helen Whately:

This information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome****Steve McCabe:**[\[96556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help increase public awareness of (a) polycystic ovary syndrome and (b) endometriosis.

Maria Caulfield:

The Women's Health Strategy for England aims to raise awareness of gynaecological conditions and ensure that women and girls can access the appropriate advice and treatment and to reduce diagnosis times. We have appointed a Women's Health Ambassador for England to increase awareness of women's health, including endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome and support implementation of the Strategy.

■ **Visual Impairment****Kirsten Oswald:**[\[84900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic impact of sight loss.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: No recent assessment has been made.

In August 2021, Deloitte Access Economics estimated that in 2019, the total economic cost of sight loss was £36 billion per year in England. This included an estimated £3.4 billion in healthcare system costs, £7.8 billion in productivity losses and other financial costs, and £24.8 billion in reduced wellbeing.

Local authorities maintain information on individuals registered with a visual impairment and have an obligation to assess them promptly and provide support. There are also more than 300 eye charities in the United Kingdom which provide support for those with sight loss and many hospital eye clinics have liaison officers and optometrists specialising in low vision. The development of integrated care systems and the National Ophthalmic Eye Care Recovery and Transformation Programme is ensuring coordinated social and clinical care from prevention and screening to accessible treatment and support for visual impairment.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Housing****Stuart C McDonald:**[\[98772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) recent steps she has taken and (b) steps she plans to take to help ensure that asylum accommodation does not have persistent black mould in it in the period since the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[98773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the contracts her Department holds with asylum accommodation providers include (a) provisions and (b) key performance indicators concerning the (i) identification and (ii) effective treatment of black mould in that accommodation.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[98774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is aware of any serious incidents of black mould affecting the health of residents in asylum accommodation; and what processes her Department has to ensure monitoring arrangements are in place to assess standards in accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

The welfare and safety of all vulnerable asylum seekers in our care is of the utmost importance to the Home Office, and we expect the highest standards from our accommodation providers. Our accommodation providers are contractually obliged to provide adequate accommodation and to conduct regular quality assurance checks across the asylum estate. Accommodation providers complete due diligence checks and all accommodation must be statutorily and regulatory compliant before they are selected. Robust compliance and governance protocols exist to ensure daily engagement is undertaken with our service providers by Home Office officials to ensure and assure that the providers' operational delivery and overall performance consistently meet the required standards. This is supplemented by weekly, monthly and quarterly governance meetings.

The Home Office also has a Contract Assurance team which conducts a range of activities to ensure accommodation providers deliver to the required standards. All contingency accommodation sites are inspected by the team. Dispersal accommodation is also inspected on an intelligence led basis. Properties are checked against the high standards set by the contract. Providers are required to take immediate action to address any issues that are found.

Asylum seekers can raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated via Migrant Help. Home Office officials review the issues and feedback received via Migrant Help to help understand the health of the service and address any problems,

for example, by targeting inspections of properties about which issues have been raised

■ Detention Centres: Manston

Stephen Kinnock: [\[98826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department took to act on the findings of the report by the Chief Inspector of Prisons into conditions at Manston asylum centre published in July 2022 which indicated that the facilities at Manston for managing people with infectious diseases were poor.

Robert Jenrick:

The HMIP report on the inspection of the short-term holding facilities at Manston between 25 – 28 July 2022 made no specific mention of concerns about facilities at Manston for managing people with infectious diseases.

The report makes clear (paragraph 4.31) that the paramedic team at Manston was well-staffed, available 24 hours a day and that there were effective arrangements with local hospitals for immediate transfer in a medical emergency.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with representatives of the Scottish Government on drug consumption rooms.

Chris Philp:

We are committed to working across the UK and have regular contact with the Scottish Government at ministerial and official level on tackling drug use and reducing the harms it causes.

This includes discussion of Scottish Government interest in drug consumption rooms. The next UK Drugs Ministerial meeting is in planning for early in the New Year and will be held in Cardiff.

■ Fraud: Email and Mobile Phones

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[95910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to help ensure those people who commit fraud and financial scams through sending fraudulent (a) text messages, (b) phone calls and (c) emails are prosecuted.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government is increasing law enforcement investigative capacity to tackle fraud, including offences originating from text messages, phone calls and emails. The Spending Review has allocated £400 million to tackle economic crime, including fraud. This is in addition to the funding that the Home Office commits each year to the

National Economic Crime Centre in the National Crime Agency (NCA), and police forces.

The Government recognises that to increase prosecution rates, there needs to be an increased pipeline of cases under investigation. We are working with City of London Police on replacing Action Fraud with a more efficient new system that will provide better intelligence to forces to aid prosecutions. Improvements are already being rolled out and more are coming, with the new service expected to be fully operational by 2024.

Having piloted new fraud investigation teams in four Regional Organised Crime Units, we are expanding these and rolling them out across all ROCUs. The Government is also increasing law enforcement investigative capacity in the City of London Police, as national lead force for fraud, and establishing a new fraud investigative function in the NCA. The pilot of a national cyber crime force focused on fraud, based in the NCA was set out in the 2021 Statement of Progress on the Economic Crime Plan. The NCA's pilot has delivered new tasking, intelligence and strategic communications capabilities in the NCA. This new national cyber crime force focused on fraud will be fully established by 2025.

■ Immigration

Stella Creasy:

[\[98711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will estimate the number of individuals with section 3C leave under the Immigration Act 1971 whose (a) employment has been (i) terminated or (ii) refused and (b) benefit claim has been (i) suspended or (ii) rejected in the last year as a result of incorrect application of rules on immigration status; and what steps she is taking to reduce these numbers.

Robert Jenrick:

Employers are not obliged to tell the Home Office when they terminate or refuse employment, and there are many reasons why a claim to benefits may be suspended or rejected.

Consequently, it is not possible to provide the estimates requested.

■ Immigration: Enforcement

Stella Creasy:

[\[98712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Immigration Enforcement has procedures for (a) notifying and (b) requesting permission from relevant organisations for enforcement operations (i) within and (ii) outside (A) Transport for London and (B) other rail stations.

Robert Jenrick:

Enforcement Operations conducted in areas under the control of the British Transport Police (BTP) within rail stations and Transport for London (TfL) locations are completed in cooperation with the BTP and / or TfL in line with the procedures set out

on Partnership Working which can be accessed at [Partnership working.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Enforcement operations completed in the public areas outside a rail station or Transport for London locations, which are not under the control of the BTP are completed in line with the public operational enforcement procedures without notification unless the risk assessment deems this necessary. The procedures for enforcement operations in public areas can be accessed at [Enforcement visits casework guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) and [enforcement-planning-assessments-v3.0-ext_002.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Martyn Day: [\[95881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November to Questions 82380 and 82381 on Immigration: EU Nationals, for what reason this information is not routinely published.

Robert Jenrick:

Published data is not currently available for administrative reviews due to a programme of transition between casework systems.

■ Migrant Workers: Skilled Workers

Seema Malhotra: [\[95841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many occupations have been listed on the shortage occupation list in each of the last 5 years.

Robert Jenrick:

A list of jobs on the current Shortage Occupation Lists can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skilled-worker-visa-shortage-occupations/skilled-worker-visa-shortage-occupations>.

A list of previous occupations that were on the Shortage Occupation List can be found here:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20201130214130/https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-k-shortage-occupation-list>.

■ Migrants: France

Stephen Kinnock: [\[98884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate he has made of the number of potential migrants that have been prevented from entering the UK through intelligence sharing and the policing agreement with France each month in 2022.

Tom Tugendhat:

The UK and France continue to work together to address illegal migration. Through our joint work with the French authorities, more than 30,000 crossing attempts have been prevented.

The new arrangements agreed by the UK and France on 14 November build on this by embedding UK officers within French operations for the first time.

■ Money Laundering

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[95761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Suspicious Activity Reports linked to sanctioned individuals or entities are currently being closely monitored by the UK Financial Intelligence Unit, broken down by (a) country of origin of the designated person or entity and (b) sector.

Tom Tugendhat:

The National Crime Agency is tasked with investigating criminal sanctions evasion and high-end money laundering, and the NCA's UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU) has national responsibility for the receipt, analysis and dissemination of Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs), including SARs linked to sanctioned individuals and entities.

For reasons of operational security, we are not able to provide further details publicly.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [\[95762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Suspicious Activity Reports were submitted by sectors not under money laundering regulation broken down by (a) country of origin of the person or entity concerned, and (b) whether they relate to (i) universities, (ii) schools, (iii) PR agents, (iv) charities and foundations, (v) business intelligence and (vi) other sectors in the last three financial years.

Tom Tugendhat:

The SARs database does not easily identify the breakdown criteria requested. We are unable to provide that detail.

■ Overseas Students: Detainees

Rachael Maskell: [\[98847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were (a) detained and (b) returned on arrival in the UK in each of the last five years.

Rachael Maskell: [\[98851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many international students with a visa who are detained on entry to the UK and then eligible to continue to continue with their course, were detained due to error within the UKVI each year.

Rachael Maskell: [\[98853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to expedite the cases of students with valid visas who are held in detention so that they meet their course registration dates.

Rachael Maskell: [98855]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department are taking steps to offer compensation to students who have missed out on their courses after being detained in error; and if she will offer these students funding for (a) a deferred year of study, (b) flights and (c) visa fees.

Rachael Maskell: [98857]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on ensuring that Border Force do not prevent international students with permission to enter and study in the UK from entering the UK border.

Rachael Maskell: [98858]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to revise the work of Border Force, to ensure that eligible students with the correct visas are not incorrectly detained.

Rachael Maskell: [98859]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for students that lose their student visas and right to study in the UK, if she make an assessment on the potential merits of allowing them to work in the UK on a work visa, until they join their course in the (a) next semester or (b) next academic year.

Rachael Maskell: [98862]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will take steps to provide compensation for lost student fees to universities for international students who have been unable to register with that university due to errors by the Border Force.

Robert Jenrick:

Border Force does not hold the data in an easily accessible format on those detained and subsequently released on grounds they held a valid visa, student or other.

However, the Home Office published data on how many people are detained or returned on gov.uk. The latest publication can be found at: [How many people are detained or returned? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned) The Immigration Rules require all arriving passengers to establish their eligibility for admission. Every passenger's passport or national identity card is checked electronically and there are also times when extra checks are conducted. Whilst this means on occasions arriving passengers, including some students, are held up by Border Force, these checks are necessary in order to maintain a safe and secure border. In some instances, individuals without the necessary immigration permission for the activities that they intend to undertake in the UK may be refused permission to enter at the border, which makes them liable for detention.

The Home Office does not routinely offer compensation but in case of maladministration, will consider ex-gratia payments where a customer has suffered a financial loss. In addition the Home Office can also consider making consolatory

payments where maladministration has caused a customer exceptional embarrassment or inconvenience. Each case will be considered taking full account of the customer's individual circumstances.

It may also be helpful to have the link to the Home Office complaints procedure which can be found on Gov.uk website: [Complaints procedure - Home Office - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complaints-procedure-home-office)

Rachael Maskell:

[98849]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many international students arriving on a student visa are detained and then released and (a) are eligible to register in their course or (b) have to return because they have missed the registration deadline each year.

Robert Jenrick:

Border Force does not hold the data in an easily accessible format on those detained and subsequently released on grounds they held a valid visa, student or other

However, the Home Office published data on how many people are detained or returned on gov.uk. The latest publication can be found at: [How many people are detained or returned? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned) ' The Immigration Rules require all arriving passengers to establish their eligibility for admission. Every passenger's passport or national identity card is checked electronically and there are also times when extra checks are conducted. Whilst this means on occasions arriving passengers, including some students, are held up by Border Force, these checks are necessary in order to maintain a safe and secure border. In some instances, individuals without the necessary immigration permission for the activities that they intend to undertake in the UK may be refused permission to enter at the border, which makes them liable for detention

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■ **Police: Equipment**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95914]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason are Police Officers not provided with boots which are required for their role.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[95915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers are required to purchase their own (a) boots, (b) torches, and (c) fire keys as part of their role.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[95916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons police officers are not universally provided with torches as part of their role.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[95917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons frontline police officers are not universally provided with fire keys to access communal blocks.

Chris Philp:

It is an operational matter for Chief Constables to ensure that the police are provided with the equipment and resources they need in order to carry out their job effectively.

■ Refugees: Resettlement

Selaine Saxby: [\[95984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the UK Resettlement Scheme closed to applicants from the majority of countries; and whether she plans to reopen that scheme to applicants from all countries.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) is a global scheme with a multi-year commitment to resettle the most vulnerable refugees in need of protection. It has not closed. It continues to offer a safe and legal route to the UK for some of the most vulnerable refugees around the world.

The UKRS is not application based. Instead, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identifies and refers refugees for resettlement to the UK using its established submission categories.

■ Visas: Skilled Workers

Seema Malhotra: [\[95840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visas have been obtained through the skilled worker visa route in each of the last 5 years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of 'Skilled Worker' and 'Skilled Worker – Health & Care' visas granted are published in table Vis_D02 of the [Entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset.

The skilled worker route was introduced in December 2020, so data is only available from this date.

■ Wind Power: Migrant Workers

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 95942 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, what salary and resident labour market condition tests were undertaken (a) as part of the decision to extend the concession and (b) during the process of assessing applications to import crew.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 95942 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, if he will take steps to consult maritime trade unions on the potential impact of the extension of the concession on UK seafarer employment in the offshore wind supply chain.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[98937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 95942 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, which organisations the Government consulted prior to making the decision to extend that concession announced on 31 October 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government regularly reviews all concessions to the Immigration Rules against the general principles of the immigration system to check whether they are necessary and regularly undertakes engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. This will continue to be the case in future.

We are clear that all employers should first seek to recruit from the resident labour market rather than using immigration to provide a work force.

The concession will expire on 30 April 2023 at which point we expect that the work will be undertaken by UK workers or those with the appropriate permission to do so.

JUSTICE

■ Dominic Raab

Steve Reed: [\[98894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department holds any records of a formal complaint being made about the conduct of the Rt. Hon. Member for Esher and Walton.

Mike Freer:

The Prime Minister has appointed Adam Tolley KC to conduct an independent investigation into formal complaints that have been received. As set out in the investigation's Terms of Reference, one formal complaint made on 15 November originates from the Ministry of Justice. The department holds records relating to the formal complaint made on 15 November.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ Taxis: Disability**

Janet Daby: [\[97795\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2022 to Question 93635 on Taxis: Disability, what her timescale is for introducing legislation to require taxi drivers to complete disability awareness training.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government is committed to requiring drivers to complete disability awareness training and I will announce future business in the usual way. I would encourage the hon. member to continue speaking to ministers in the Department for Transport.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Coal: Cumbria**

Sam Tarry: [\[95973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has conducted an environmental impact assessment on the potential opening of new coal coking mines in Cumbria.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [73894](#) on 2 November 2022.

■ Development Aid: Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Helen Hayes: [\[98815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate he has made of how much Official Development Assistance has been spent on payments to Homes for Ukraine hosts.

Helen Hayes: [\[98817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his planned timetable is for the publication of data on spending on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Felicity Buchan:

Relevant published guidance on international development aid spending are being followed. Details of spending will be set out in due course.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [\[98722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many homes were estimated to be below an Energy Performance Certificate Level C in Sefton Central constituency as of 29 November 2022.

Lee Rowley:

The latest data tables on Energy Performance Buildings Certificates are available [here](#).

■ Homelessness: Blackpool Council**Scott Benton:****[95954]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding his Department has provided to Blackpool Council for housing interventions to help reduce rough sleeping and homelessness since December 2019; and through which schemes this funding was provided.

Felicity Buchan:

Since 2019, Blackpool has received £3,469,343 in Government funding to help tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. This includes funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant, and its predecessors the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant, and the Rough Sleeping Initiative, and includes its allocation for the three-year Rough Sleeping Initiative from 2022-2025.

■ Local Government Finance**Dan Carden:****[98771]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement for the 2023-24 financial year on the level of equality in local government funding; and if he will take steps to ensure that the funding is distributed according to local levels of deprivation.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN [97707](#) on 1 December 2022.

■ Local Government: Remote Meetings**Richard Fuller:****[95817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made on reviewing the responses to the call for evidence on local authority remote meetings, published on 25 March 2021; and when he plans to publish the Government's response.

Lee Rowley:

The Government issued a call for evidence on remote meetings last year. We are considering the responses and will be issuing a response in due course.

■ Local Housing Allowance**Rachael Maskell:****[94800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the difference between Local

Housing Allowance rates and the level of private rents in each region of the UK; and whether he is taking steps to reduce that difference.

Felicity Buchan:

In April 2020, we boosted investment in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates by nearly £1 billion. This provides 1.5 million recipients of Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit, with around £600 more housing support in 2020/21 than they would otherwise have received.

■ **Planning Permission: Listed Buildings**

Priti Patel:

[\[95832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will undertake a review of (a) paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework and (b) associated guidance on planning applications for the replacement of existing windows with uPVC windows in dwellings that are heritage assets due to their being (i) listed buildings and (ii) located in a conservation area; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring decision-makers to consider the impact of the replacement of windows on the (A) environment, (B) carbon footprint of the dwelling, (C) health of the dwelling's occupants and (D) prevention of mould.

Lucy Frazer:

In the Government's British Energy Security Strategy, published earlier this year, we committed to reviewing the practical planning barriers that households can face when installing energy efficiency measures, including in conservation areas and listed buildings. Work on the review is currently underway and I have asked officials to look at a range of issues, including uPVC, to help inform work on this.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Kirklees**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to improve the supply of social housing in (a) Huddersfield constituency and (b) the wider Kirklees area.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of trends in the level of social housing provision in Huddersfield on the Government's levelling up agenda.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government understands the importance of social housing to maintaining communities, both in the Hon. Member's constituency and right across the country.

That is why, through our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme we will deliver significant volumes of social housing, including homes for social rent, to ensure that hard working families and individuals can live in safety and security in the communities they call home.

■ Social Security Benefits: Wales

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[97566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November to Question 93503 on Government Departments: Devolution, whether the Concordat on Statistics between the UK Government and devolved Administrations covers the sharing of details of the recipients of DWP benefits with the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Authorities.

Felicity Buchan:

The Concordat on Statistics sets out a framework for statistical co-operation between the UK Government and devolved administrations in relation to the production of statistics for and within the UK, statistical standards and the statistics profession.

The Department for Work and Pensions engages with Welsh Government and Welsh local authorities on statistical data sharing initiatives where there is a legal power to do so and the appropriate data sharing governance (agreements) have been put in place.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Domestic Abuse

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[95781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment on the impact of trends in the level of availability of emergency accommodation in Huddersfield on victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment on the impact of the trends in the level of availability of emergency accommodation in Havering on victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[98911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment on the impact of trends in the level of availability of emergency accommodation in Stockport constituency on victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Felicity Buchan:

We introduced a new statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that all victims, including children, have access to safe accommodation when they need it. The amount of funding for each council for 2021/22 can be found using this [link](#) and the funding for each council for 2022/23 can be found using this [link](#).

In addition, we have run a number of joint workshops with the Local Government Association and each council must work closely with their Local Partnership Board, assess the needs of victims locally and commission the right safe accommodation support services needed to meet the identified need.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Castlereagh Foundation**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[98673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent progress he has made on establishing the Castlereagh Foundation.

Mr Steve Baker:

The UK Government committed in New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) to provide funding to establish the Castlereagh Foundation, a fund to support academic research through Universities and other partners to explore identity and the shifting patterns of social identity in Northern Ireland.

The Government amended the Identity and Language (NI) Bill in the House of Lords to enable the new Office of Identity and Cultural Expression to establish the Castlereagh Foundation. The UK Government will make funding available to the Office to establish the Foundation, in line with the NDNA commitment.

The Bill has completed its passage in Parliament and is currently awaiting Royal Assent.

■ Local Government: Elections

Stephen Farry: [\[98940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving the date of the 2023 Local Government elections in Northern Ireland due to the date set for the Coronation.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is currently considering the options available to ensure people in Northern Ireland can celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III while ensuring the smooth running of the democratic process.

TRANSPORT**■ Avanti West Coast: Atalian Servest**

Navendu Mishra: [\[98910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the (a) rate of pay and (b) employment conditions of cleaners employed by Atalian Servest on Avanti West Coast rail services.

Huw Merriman:

Neither the Department nor Avanti West Coast has a direct contractual relationship with Atalian Servest for cleaning services, therefore, there has been no assessment of the rate of pay or employment conditions. However, Avanti West Coast is accredited to the Living Wage Foundation and, as such, it is looking at plans for

adopting the Real Living Wage across its whole supply chain (including subcontractors).

■ **Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals**

Patricia Gibson:

[\[98770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency on taking steps to review the conditions to apply for a driving licence for (a) newly-settled Ukrainians and (b) other non-UK nationals living in the UK so they are able to apply for (i) bus driver and (ii) jobs in other sectors in which there are a shortage of drivers.

Mr Richard Holden:

All non-UK nationals who are normally and lawfully resident in GB can apply for a provisional licence to drive buses and lorries. All applicants must hold a GB licence to drive cars, provide proof of identity and meet medical and conduct standards. Non-UK nationals will need to provide evidence that they have leave to remain in the UK.

Lorry and bus licences issued by EEA countries can be exchanged for the GB equivalent, as can licences issued in Switzerland for some categories of lorry and bus. Officials are progressing the work needed to introduce an exchange arrangement for Ukrainian lorry and bus licences as soon as possible. Exchange agreements are also being progressed with other countries.

■ **Driving Licences: North East Hampshire**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[98802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving licence applications (a) have been and (b) are yet to be processed by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency from people in North East Hampshire constituency in the last 12 months.

Mr Richard Holden:

Information on the number of driving licence applications processed or awaiting processing is not held by Parliamentary constituency or region.

■ **Driving under Influence: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has received representations from the Scottish Government on the devolution of powers to regulate the penalty for drink driving.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has not received any such representations.

■ Railways: Infrastructure**Sam Tarry:**[\[95966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much and what proportion of the £3.6 million allocated to rail infrastructure has been spent; and when he plans to spend the remaining proportion of that funding.

Huw Merriman:

Since 2017, the DfT and Innovate UK have run six First of a Kind (FOAK) competitions. So far, we have awarded over £38m to 125 projects led by a range of organisations to support innovations that help to address priorities for the railway identified by both government and industry. This includes projects funded under FOAK 2022, announced in November.

You have clarified that your question relates to the first FOAK competition, which launched in October 2017 and offered £3.5m to bids focusing specifically on implementing innovative technology on railway vehicles, rather than rail infrastructure. Through a scoring process by independent experts, 10 winning projects were selected, to a total value of £3.375m.

■ Shipping: Training**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[98785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on the pass rate for the Chief Mate Stability paper of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping exam in each of the last five years; whether he has had discussions with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) on the exam; and if he will discuss with the MCA potential steps to increase the pass rate.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Chief Mate Stability paper is administered by Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). SQA formally hold pass rate statistics, but I am aware that the MCA continually monitor the exam pass rates and is currently working with the relevant industry representatives to increase the pass rate and improve the quality of the exam.

TREASURY**■ Business: Taxation****Bill Esterson:**[\[98717\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the average change in the cost of tax for businesses following the freeze to National Insurance thresholds announced in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

Taken together with the changes made since Summer 2022, businesses will receive an overall average tax cut on their National Insurance contributions bill of £6,300 in 2023-24.

Childcare: Tax Allowances**Kwasi Kwarteng:**[\[98841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of making childcare costs tax deductible.

John Glen:

The Government already offers a range of support for parents to help with childcare costs. Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) provides financial support for working parents with their childcare costs. For every £8 parents pay into their childcare account, the Government adds £2 up to a maximum of £2,000 in top up per year for each child up to age 11 and up to £4,000 per disabled child until they are 17. All three-and-four-year-olds can access 15 hours of free childcare per week, and working parents of three-and four-year-olds can access an additional 15 hours of free childcare per week. Some parents can also access the disadvantaged two-year-old offer, which provides 15 hours of free childcare per week to two-year-olds who meet certain social and economic criteria. Universal Credit claimants can claim up to 85% of their childcare costs.

The Government keeps childcare policy under regular review.

Cost of Living: Parkinson's Disease**Dame Caroline Dinenage:**[\[98727\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on the financial well-being of people with Parkinson's.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that the rising cost of living has presented additional financial challenges to many people, and especially to the most vulnerable members of society, such as disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. That is why the Government is taking decisive action to support households while ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way.

If individuals have extra-costs arising from their Parkinson's disease, then they may qualify for disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP). At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced that it will provide a further Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 in 2023/24 to people in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as PIP or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is additional to the £150 payment for recipients of disability benefits in 2022 already announced as part of the Cost of Living package in May.

These payments can be received in addition to the other Cost of Living Payments for households on means-tested benefits, namely the £650 payment announced in May and the additional £900 payment announced at Autumn Statement. Individuals who have limited or no ability to work because of their disability or long-term health condition, and are in receipt of means-tested benefits such as income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the Universal Credit Health top up, are eligible for this support.

Those living with a long-term health condition, such as Parkinson's disease, can also benefit from other forms of non-means-tested support which the Government is providing to assist with UK households' energy bills. We have taken decisive action to support millions of households with rising energy costs through the Energy Price Guarantee, which limits the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity. In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee, millions of the most vulnerable households will receive further support this year through the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme. The £150 Council Tax rebate will also mean that all households in Council Tax bands A-D will receive a rebate, and 99% of eligible households have already received this.

■ **Debts: Developing Countries**

Apsana Begum:

[\[98919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of levels of sovereign debt on the ability of lower income countries to invest in climate change (a) mitigation and (b) adaptation.

John Glen:

The UK recognises the significant debt vulnerabilities faced by many low-income countries and that high debt service levels may impact efforts to invest in and respond to climate change, as well as other development goals.

We are fully committed to helping the most vulnerable countries address the challenges they face. At COP27, the UK announced that UK Export Finance will become the first export credit agency in the world to offer Climate Resilient Debt Clauses (CRDCs) in its direct sovereign lending. These clauses build in debt repayment pauses when a climate shock or natural disaster hits. We also developed and published key design principles for CRDCs in private sector lending.

The UK is also delivering on our commitment to spend £11.6bn of International Climate Finance (ICF), striking a balance between mitigation and adaptation spending.

■ **Mortgages: Interest Rates**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[98891\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support his Department has provided to homeowners affected by rising mortgage interest rates in (a) the UK, (b) the North East and (c) Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency.

Andrew Griffith:

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 offering Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans for those in receipt of an income-related benefit. It was announced at Autumn Statement that, from spring 2023, the Government will allow those on Universal Credit to apply for an SMI loan to help with interest repayments after three months, instead of nine. We will also abolish the zero earnings rule to allow claimants to continue receiving support while in work and on Universal Credit. In addition, the Government offers mortgage borrowers 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.

Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:**[\[98900\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list the values of the Barnett consequential funding for Northern Ireland relating to his spending decisions in the Autumn Statement 2022.

John Glen:

As a result of the decisions taken at Autumn Statement 2022, the Northern Ireland Executive's funding is increasing by around £650m over 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The Block Grant Transparency publication will set out a full breakdown of funding for the Northern Ireland Executive in due course.

Public Sector: Wales**Ruth Jones:**[\[98778\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Welsh Government on ensuring adequate levels of funding for public services in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Welsh Government is well-funded to deliver public services in Wales. The 2021 Spending Review set the largest annual block grants, in real terms, of any spending review settlement since the devolution Acts. This provided £18 billion per year for the Welsh Government. This settlement is still growing in real terms this year, and over the three-year spending review period, despite inflation being higher than expected.

In addition, Autumn Statement decisions are increasing Welsh Government funding by around £1.2 billion over 2023-24 and 2024-25. This means the Welsh Government is receiving around 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. The Welsh Government also has its own tax powers if it wants to increase spending further.

The Welsh Government and HM Treasury regularly discuss funding issues throughout the year. I have met with the Welsh Government's Minister for Finance and Local Government three times since I have been in post, most recently on Thursday 17 November.

■ Taxation: Carbon Emissions**Jessica Morden:**[\[95815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 80673 on Taxation: Carbon Emissions, whether the consultation on a potential carbon border adjustment mechanism will be carried out alongside a review of the carbon price support mechanism.

James Cartlidge:

The Government is exploring a range of policies that could potentially mitigate future risk of carbon leakage. The government committed to consult on this, as the FST set out on 16th May 2022 in a written ministerial statement, and will now do that in the spring.

As the Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement, the government will also engage with industry and conduct a review of the Carbon Price Support beyond 2024-25.

■ Trusts: VAT**Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[97587\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that VAT registrations for trusts are processed in a (a) time-considerate and (b) effective manner.

Victoria Atkins:

Trusts are not treated differently from any other customer when they apply to register for VAT, and therefore the response will need to be ascribed to all VAT Registration applications.

HMRC continues to deal with most VAT Registrations applications within their usual 40 working days, however they have seen more applications requiring additional checks.

HMRC are dedicating extra resource to this and they expect service levels to improve quickly. Businesses including Trusts can continue trading while they register.

HMRC expect to have improved the on-hand position in VAT Registration significantly and to have reduced those cases that are older than 40 working days, by end of December 2022.

HMRC has also targeted the resource to their VAT Registration telephone helpline to help genuine customers to expedite their applications.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[97621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the HMRC system for registering VAT for trusts was operating correctly as of 28 November 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

The VAT Registration Service has been operating correctly from the 28th of November 2022, and has progressed applications for Trusts normally during this time.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson: [\[92121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much was paid in tariffs on goods entering Northern Ireland between 1 January 2021 and 31 October 2022; of that figure how much was paid in tariffs on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain; and of that figure how much went to the (a) Government and (b) EU.

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson: [\[92122\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the total value of tariffs paid on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain, broken down by each tariff, between 1 January 2021 and 31 October 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

In September 2022, HMRC was for the first time able to release data in relation to the declarations made on goods entering Northern Ireland from Great Britain, for the 2021 calendar year. This information sets out the number of full declarations cleared by HMRC in 2021 for movements of goods into NI from GB and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/summary-of-movements-of-goods-into-northern-ireland-from-great-britain-2021/summary-of-movements-of-goods-into-northern-ireland-from-great-britain-2021>.

Traders moving goods into Northern Ireland can claim a waiver for duty on goods which might otherwise be charged tariffs, if they have not exceeded the total 'de minimis aid' allowance when their import declaration is submitted. Most businesses can claim up to a maximum of €200,000 of aid over 3 tax years.

No tariff duties collected on goods entering Northern Ireland are remitted to the EU. The Government intends in future to release further information in relation to tariff liabilities for goods and will do so in due course for the most recent possible time period.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carer's Allowance

Patrick Grady:

[\[98809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the weekly earning limits for Carers Allowance.

Tom Pursglove:

Many carers who are receiving Carer's Allowance are also in households receiving Universal Credit, whose structure of tapers and work allowances (where applicable) effectively takes precedence over the earnings rules in Carer's Allowance for these carers. This helps ensure that, if they wish to work, carers on the lowest incomes are better off doing so. There is, however, no requirement for those caring for 35 hours or more a week to undertake work search whilst receiving Universal Credit. In work or out of work, these carers may also receive the Universal Credit Carer Element, worth around an additional £2,000 a year.

Some carers may not be able to receive Universal Credit, for example due to their levels of household capital or income. These carers may only be receiving Carer's Allowance. This is not means-tested and not based on National Insurance contributions. It has an earnings limit which permits carers to undertake some part-time work if they are able to do so. This recognises the benefits of staying in touch with the workplace, including greater financial independence and social interaction.

We know that some carers who are above Universal Credit thresholds are keen to maintain contact with the labour market, so we want to encourage carers in this position to combine some paid work with their caring duties wherever possible. That is why we regularly increase the earnings limit when it is warranted and affordable. The Carer's Allowance earnings limit is currently £132 a week. Subject to Parliamentary approval, this will increase to £139 a week from April 2023. This will mean that the earnings limit will have increased by over one third since 2010.

It should be noted that Carer's Allowance is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. While the Scottish Government builds its capacity to replace it with Scottish Carer's Assistance, DWP Ministers have agreed that DWP will administer Carer's Allowance on behalf of the Scottish Ministers under an agency agreement. For as long as that agreement is in place, the Scottish Ministers need to ensure that Carer's Allowance rules and rates in Scotland maintains legislative parity with Carer's Allowance in England and Wales.

■ Cost of Living Payments and Means-tested Benefits

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[98877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to ensure that 2023-24 Cost of Living payment for those on means-tested benefits will not exclude claimants whose Universal Credit payments have been reduced to a nil award as a result of a sanction.

Mims Davies:

We will be bringing forward legislation for the 23/24 Cost of Living Payments in due course.

Claimants who were sanctioned but still had an entitlement to a UC payment of at least 1p for an assessment period ending during the qualifying periods would have been eligible to receive a 2022/23 Cost of Living Payment. Sanctions are calculated with reference to the standard UC allowance only. We recognise many of the most vulnerable are those entitled to other elements in UC, such as housing or child costs. If a sanction is applied, claimants continue to receive these other elements and would remain eligible for Cost of Living Payments.

Those determined to have a UC nil award during the qualifying assessment period could be eligible for a 2022/23 Cost of Living Payment retrospectively if a sanction is successfully appealed, or if they are awarded a Hardship payment in the qualifying period.

98.9% of sanctions are for failing to attend a mandatory appointment at a Jobcentre, and can often be resolved quickly by claimants getting in touch with the Jobcentre and attending their next appointment. Hardship payments are available as a safeguard to claimants who demonstrate that they cannot meet their immediate and most essential needs (including accommodation, heating, food and hygiene) as a result of their sanction.

■ Mortgages: Interest Rates

Chi Onwurah:

[\[98893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of rising mortgage interest rates on levels of poverty in (a) the UK, (b) the North East and (c) Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency.

Mims Davies:

It is not possible to produce a robust estimate on the effect of mortgage interest rates on levels of poverty in the UK, the North East, or the Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency.

Statistics on poverty levels in 2019/20 are available at:

[https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/\(opens in a new tab\)](https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/(opens in a new tab)) on the HBAI dataset.

It is not possible to provide a robust estimate for 2020/21 due to the impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had on data quality.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ State Retirement Pensions: Terminal Illnesses

Dave Doogan:

[98787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to allow people diagnosed with a terminal illness to access their state pension prior to their pension age if they have accrued sufficient contributions.

Laura Trott:

We have no plans to allow early access to State Pension.

For those at the end of their life, the Government's priority is providing financial support quickly and compassionately. The main way that the Department does this is through special benefit rules, sometimes referred to as "the Special Rules". These enable people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to certain benefits, without needing to attend a medical assessment, serve waiting periods and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit. For many years, the Special Rules have applied to people who have 6 months or less to live and now they are being changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live.

Scotland has the powers under the Scotland Act 2016 to make additional discretionary payments should it wish to do so. Whilst pensions remain a reserved matter, the Scotland Act 2016 has given the Scottish Government the ability to use a wide range of new welfare provisions.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Water company fines to be channelled into environmental improvements**

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):
[\[HCWS408\]](#)

On Wednesday 30 November the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs announced that future funding from fines handed out to water companies that pollute our rivers and seas will be invested in schemes that benefit our natural environment.

At present, money from fines imposed by Ofwat and those arising from Environment Agency prosecutions is returned to the Treasury. Under the new plans, ringfenced funds will be invested directly into environmental and water quality improvement projects.

Further details on the plans will follow next year.

Since 2015, the Environment Agency has concluded 56 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies, securing fines of over £141m. Defra is bringing forward proposals to raise the civil penalty for water companies who pollute the environment.

We are going further and faster than any other government to protect and enhance the health of our rivers and seas. Our new Environment Act puts in place more protections against water pollution than ever before.

The government has also launched an ambitious plan to tackle sewage discharges from storm overflows. The Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history – a £56 billion capital investment by 2050.