



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 7 December 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 07 December 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	■ Recovery Loan Scheme	14
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ Recovery Loan Scheme: Fraud	14
■ Business: EU Law	6	■ Research: Investment	15
■ Civil Service: EU Law	6	■ Small Businesses: Washington and Sunderland West	16
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Departmental Responsibilities	7	■ Solar Power: Parking	16
■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Wallasey	7	CABINET OFFICE	16
■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters	7	■ Blood: Contamination	16
■ Energy Charter Treaty	8	■ Cabinet Office: Chief Scientific Advisers	17
■ Environment Protection: Job Creation	9	■ Infected Blood Compensation Framework Study	17
■ EU Law	9	■ Infected Blood Inquiry	18
■ Green Homes Grant Scheme	10	■ Prime Minister: Accountancy	18
■ Housing: Energy	10	DEFENCE	18
■ Housing: Sefton Central	11	■ Defence Equipment: Procurement	18
■ Housing: Wallasey	11	■ Electronic Warfare: Recruitment	21
■ New Businesses	11	■ HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance	21
■ Newport Wafer Fab	12	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	22
■ Nexperia Newport	13	■ Broadband: Universal Service Obligation	22
■ Pre-school Education: Energy	13		
■ Public Houses: Shropshire	13		
■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Sefton Central	14		

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Chief Scientific Advisers	22	■ Disease Control	35
■ Television Licences: Non-payment	22	■ Eggs: Prices	36
■ Tourism: Coronavirus	23	■ Eggs: Supermarkets	36
EDUCATION	24	■ Farmers: Mental Health Services	36
■ Adoption and Children in Care: Mental Health Services	24	■ Farms: Tenants	37
■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board	24	■ Livestock: Drug Resistance	37
■ BTEC Qualifications: Finance	25	■ Natural England	38
■ Childcare: Tax Allowances	26	■ Pigs: Animal Housing	38
■ Children in Care	26	■ Poultry	38
■ Educational Psychology: Labour Turnover and Pay	27	■ Seasonal Workers: Conditions of Employment	39
■ Pre-school Education: Training	27	■ Water Companies: Accountability	39
■ Public Transport: Gender Based Violence	28	■ Zane Gbangbola	39
■ Special Educational Needs	29	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	40
■ Training: Wallasey	30	■ Ascension Island: Immigration	40
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	32	■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Protected Areas	40
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	32	■ Chagos Islands: Marine Protected Areas	40
■ Agriculture: Land	32	■ Development Aid: Females	41
■ Air Pollution: Chemicals and Metals	33	■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: St Helena	41
■ Animals: Antibiotics	33	■ International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief	41
■ Avian Influenza	33	■ Iran: Israel	42
■ Bathing Waters Regulations 2013	33	■ Jordan and South Sudan: Sexual Offences	42
■ Birds: Conservation	34	■ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Nutrition	43
■ Dangerous Dogs	34	■ Palestinians: Charities	43
■ Dangerous Dogs: Exemptions	35	■ South Africa and St Helena: Aviation	43

■ Tristan da Cunha: Fisheries	44	■ Health Professions: Recruitment	53
■ Turkey: Counter-terrorism	44	■ Health Professions: Registration	53
■ Turks and Caicos Islands: Crime	45	■ Health Services and Social Services: Inspections	54
■ Turks and Caicos Islands: Youth Custody	45	■ Health Services: Carers	54
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	45	■ Health: Screening	54
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	45	■ Hyperactivity: Children and Young People	55
■ Antidepressants: North East	46	■ Incontinence: Health Services	55
■ Better Care Fund	46	■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control	56
■ Cancer: Health Services	46	■ Influenza: Vaccination	56
■ Cancer: Radiotherapy	47	■ IVF: HIV Infection	57
■ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Medical Treatments	47	■ Long Covid	57
■ Clozapine: Misuse	47	■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People	57
■ Community Diagnostic Centres	48	■ Mental Health Services: Private Sector	58
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	49	■ Mental Health Services: Shropshire	58
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	49	■ NHS: Correspondence	58
■ Dementia	49	■ Palliative Care	59
■ Dental Services	50	■ Palliative Care: Children	59
■ Dental Services: Hounslow	50	■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Children	59
■ Diabetes: Health Services	50	■ Social Services: Finance	60
■ Disability: Children	51	■ Vaccination	60
■ Disability: Employment Schemes	51	HOME OFFICE	60
■ Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association	51	■ Asylum: Richmond	60
■ Epilepsy: Females	51	■ Asylum: Saffron Walden	61
■ Essential Tremor: Magnetic Resonance Imagers	52	■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation	62
■ General Dental Council: Standards	52	■ Children: Detainees	62
■ Health Professions: Midlands	53	■ Detention Centres	63

■ Economic Crime	65	TRANSPORT	79
■ Gender Based Violence	66	■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions	79
■ Home Office: Accountancy	66	■ Civil Aviation (Denied Boarding, Compensation and Assistance) Regulations 2005	82
■ Housing: Asylum	67	■ Diesel and Vegetable Oils: Greenhouse Gas Emissions	82
■ Internet: Vulnerable Adults	68	■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	83
■ Members: Correspondence	68	■ High Speed 2 Line: Expenditure	83
■ Passports: North East Hampshire	68	■ Jet Skis	84
■ Police: Recruitment	68	■ Motorways: Safety	84
■ Radicalism	69	■ Network Rail and Train Operating Companies: Pay	84
■ Radicalism: Social Media	70	■ Railways: Fares and Overcrowding	85
■ Wind Power: Labour Market	70	■ Railways: Strikes	85
■ Youth Mobility Scheme	71	■ Railways: Suffolk	86
JUSTICE	71	■ Roads: Air Pollution	86
■ Arrest Warrants: Unpaid Fines	71	■ Roads: Ely	86
■ Ministry of Justice: Grievance Procedures	72	■ Vegetable Oils: Prices	87
■ Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave	74	TREASURY	87
■ Prisoners and Young Offenders	75	■ Business: Government Assistance	87
■ Prisoners' Release: Christmas	75	■ Childcare: Tax Allowances	88
■ Prisoners' Release: Maladministration and Prisoner Escapes	76	■ Debts	89
■ Prisons: Christmas	77	■ Freezing of Assets: Russia	89
LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	77	■ Inflation	90
■ British National (Overseas): Housing	77	■ Pensions: Public Sector	91
■ Community Assets	78	■ Public Finance: Further Education	91
■ Leasehold	78	■ Safe Hands Plans: Insolvency	91
NORTHERN IRELAND	78	■ Taxpayer Protection Taskforce: Staff	92
■ Food: Northern Ireland	78	■ Treasury: Accountancy	92

WORK AND PENSIONS	93	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	103
■ Cost of Living Payments and Universal Credit	93	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	103
■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints	93	■ Post Office: Compensation for Horizon scandal	103
■ Employment: Disability	94	DEFENCE	105
■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections	95	■ Defences's Support to Government Contingency Planning for Strike Action	105
■ Health and Safety Executive: Staff	96	HOME OFFICE	106
■ Jobseeker's Allowance	96	■ Consultation seeking views on additional agencies to be granted Accredited Financial Investigation powers	106
■ Local Housing Allowance: Uprating	97	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	107
■ Universal Credit	98	■ Electoral Commission – Performance Standards for Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers	107
■ Universal Credit: Payments	98	■ English Freeports Update	107
■ Universal Credit: Students	98	NORTHERN IRELAND	108
■ Universal Credit: Veterans	99	■ Fifth Substantive Report of the Independent Reporting Commission	108
■ Work and Health Programme	100		
MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	102		
TRANSPORT	102		
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	102		

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

■ Business: EU Law

Sir John Hayes: [\[98649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of regulatory costs to businesses which arose from their compliance with regulations that originated from the EU prior to the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and if he will place this information in the House of Commons Library.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government does not hold this information centrally and on a fully comparable basis, as legislation to implement obligations arising from EU regulations, decisions and directives was exempt from the Better Regulation scrutiny process.

However, going forwards the Retained EU Law (REUL) programme and related departmental appraisals will seek to assess the costs to business from changes to REUL.

Sir John Hayes: [\[98650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which EU regulations were identified in Departmental submissions made to his Department between 2001 and 2015 as incurring significant costs to businesses that were not able to be repealed due to the UK's membership of the EU.

Kevin Hollinrake:

BEIS does not hold this information and we are not aware of it being gathered.

■ Civil Service: EU Law

Sir John Hayes: [\[98648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November to Question 75765 on Civil Service: EU Law, whether his Department uses the expression out of scope in relation to regulations that were previously unamendable owing to the UK's membership of the EU.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have defined retained EU law in scope of the sunset in clause 1 and 3 of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill. Any retained EU law that is primary legislation or amendments to primary legislation made by EU-derived subordinate legislation, will not be in scope of the sunset. The Bill provides for powers to amend retained EU law.

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

Chi Onwurah:

[98758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2022 to Question 82299 on Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Departmental Responsibilities, whether the Minister for Investment Security will hold responsibility for the Office for Life Sciences.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

I am Minister for Industry and Investment Security, and Life Sciences is one of the sectors within my portfolio. This includes the Office for Life Sciences.

The portfolios have been published in full on www.gov.uk/government/ministers.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Wallasey

Dame Angela Eagle:

[101701]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises on Wallasey constituency are receiving the correct level of support from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme is set out clearly in legislation and will be applied in a uniform way by all licensed suppliers. The regulations include a robust compliance and enforcement regime to ensure requirements are being met. Suppliers are also required to inform customers about the details of support, including the amount of the discount and discounted supply price.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters

Chris Elmore:

[98797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure that people with non-smart prepayment meter receive their Energy Bill Support Scheme 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.

Data for October indicates all vouchers have been dispatched by suppliers and take up so far is over 60%. The Government is issuing communications via a broad range of channels and stakeholders to increase awareness of the vouchers and how to redeem them. The Government will address any redemption issues identified.

Mike Amesbury: [\[98814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number and proportion of households with submeters that will not receive the Energy Bills Support Scheme payment.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: The Government has not made an estimate of the number and proportion of households with submeters that will not receive the Energy Bills Support Scheme payment. However, the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount off energy bills for the small percentage of households that will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Details on delivery mechanisms, eligibility and timing will be announced shortly.

Ronnie Cowan: [\[98846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with the utility companies on the paying of the Energy Bills Support Scheme to pre-payment customers.

Graham Stuart:

Officials in this Department and in Ofgem, the industry regulator, speak to all suppliers on progress and monitoring of the scheme regularly. Additionally, suppliers are required to report every month on how they have provided the discount to their customers.

Ronnie Cowan: [\[98848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what percentage of pre-payment electricity customers have received the first payment, from October 2022, of the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

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. Data for October indicates all vouchers have been dispatched by suppliers and take up so far is over 60%.

EBSS credit has been applied automatically to smart prepayment meters. As of 1 November, 97% of Smart prepayment customers had their credit applied.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Ruth Cadbury: [\[100999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the vote by the European Parliament in favour of withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty on 23 November 2022 on the UK's position on that treaty.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has been a strong advocate for ECT modernisation. At the Energy Charter Conference on 22 November, the decision to adopt the modernised Treaty was postponed. The UK has been closely monitoring the situation surrounding the Energy Charter Treaty's modernisation process, including the positions taken by other Contracting Parties. The Government will continue to do so as part of its engagement with the Treaty's modernisation process.

Environment Protection: Job Creation**Dame Angela Eagle:**[\[101699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution published on 18 November 2020, how many jobs have been created in Wallasey constituency as a result of the implementation of that plan.

Graham Stuart:

The Government does not collect green jobs data at constituency level.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:[\[99770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the number of green jobs in Washington and Sunderland West constituency.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: The Department is working with the Department for Education and local partners to ensure green skills are considered through Local Skills Improvement Plans, which will set out the key skills needs and the priority changes required to provision in an area. The North East Automotive Alliance has been designated to work with a range of employers to lead the Local Skills Improvement Plan for the area which includes Washington and Sunderland West. The Secretary of State for Education may only approve a Plan if satisfied that there has been consideration of the skills related to net zero targets, climate change adaptation, and other environmental goals.

Latest official statistics show there are already around 430,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country, and the Government is working with the Green Jobs Delivery Group to explore how central government, local government and businesses can further support local areas to deliver a successful net zero labour market transition.

EU Law**Stella Creasy:**[\[101720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.

Stella Creasy: [\[101721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In leaving the EU we regained the ability to regulate autonomously, and the Government is therefore conducting a comprehensive review of all retained EU employment law to ensure that our regulations are tailored to the needs of the UK economy and help create the conditions for economic growth.

Green Homes Grant Scheme**Bill Esterson:** [\[101716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has the Government spent on the Green Homes Grant scheme as 1 December 2022.

Bill Esterson: [\[101717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes have had energy efficiency measures installed as a result of the Green Homes Grant scheme.

Bill Esterson: [\[101718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications to the Green Homes Grant scheme were (a) submitted and (b) successful as of 1 December 2022.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS estimates that the total Government contribution for measures installed through the Green Homes Grant Vouchers (GHGV) scheme was £233 million, and through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG) schemes was £269 million.

Through the GHGV scheme, around 43,200 households had at least one measure installed, and around 37,000 through LAD and HUG.

Through the GHGV scheme, there were around 113,700 household applications with 43,200 households being successful. BEIS does not hold application information for LAD and HUG.

Housing: Energy**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[99769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the rate of energy efficiency measure installations in homes in Washington and Sunderland West constituency.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: The Government is committed to improving the energy performance of homes across the country, including in Washington and Sunderland West.

The Government is already investing £6.6 billion over this parliament 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.

■ Housing: Sefton Central**Bill Esterson:****[101714]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes there are in Sefton Central constituency as of 2 December 2022; and if he will make an estimate of how many and what proportion of those homes require external wall insulation.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS has published information on the number of households by parliamentary constituency in the latest [Household Energy Efficiency Statistics, headline release](#).

BEIS does not publish information specifically on the number of homes that require external wall insulation, nationally or by constituency. Information on the cumulative number of properties with solid walls in Great Britain, including the number remaining to be insulated, can be found in table 8.6 in the HEE tables accompanying the latest [Household Energy Efficiency Statistics, detailed report](#).

■ Housing: Wallasey**Dame Angela Eagle:****[101702]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which wards in Wallasey constituency have had external wall insulation fitted.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS estimates that under the [Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#) and [Green Homes Grant \(GHG\)](#) Government schemes, some households in all wards in Wallasey constituency have had external wall insulation fitted.

■ New Businesses**Rachael Maskell:****[98867]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what economic benefits he has identified from business (a) incubators and (b) accelerators.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The potential economic benefits of business incubators and accelerators include improved business survival rates, faster growth and higher employment from participating companies as compared to the business population overall.

A study of incubators and accelerators carried out for the Department in 2019 used the following indicators:

- the business's perception of the impact of attending the programme;
- growth in employees since attending;
- change in proportion of employees that hold a degree;
- change in development stage;
- innovativeness (as perceived by the startup business);
- number of patent applications;
- R&D expenditure;
- amount of investment raised.

Rachael Maskell:

[98869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how he evaluates the economic benefits of business (a) incubators and (b) accelerators.

Kevin Hollinrake:

In the case of programmes that are funded directly by the Department, economic evaluation is carried out according to guidance set out in the Green Book: appraisal and evaluation in central government.

A report on the impact of incubators and accelerators on start-up businesses and on the wider business ecosystem was commissioned by the Department in 2019 and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-impact-of-business-accelerators-and-incubators-in-the-uk>. This found that most participating businesses considered the contribution of the incubator or accelerator as significant or vital to their success. The report also notes that "accelerators have positive spillover effects on the wider business ecosystem."

■ Newport Wafer Fab

Beth Winter:

[98903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to his oral contribution of 21 November 2022, Official Report, col 35, what steps he is taking to ensure all jobs at the Newport Wafer Fab site are protected following the Final Order notice under the National Security and Investment Act.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government understands the importance of Newport Wafer Fab (renamed Nexperia Newport) to the local economy and the South Wales semiconductor Cluster and that this will be an uncertain time for employees. Decisions regarding the day-to-day running of the Newport site is a matter for the owners, but officials will work closely with Nexperia BV to implement the Secretary of State's decision.

■ Nexperia Newport

Beth Winter:

[\[98902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's decision entitled Acquisition of Newport Wafer Fab by Nexperia BV: notice of final order, published 16 November 2022, for what reasons it was determined that Nexperia BV should sell at least 86 per cent of Nexperia Newport Limited.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Following a detailed national security assessment, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy considered that the Final Order requiring Nexperia BV to divest at least 86% of its shareholding in Nexperia Newport is necessary and proportionate to mitigate the national security risks. The Government cannot comment on the detail of those risks, but they are summarised in the notice of the Final Order which is published on GOV.UK.

■ Pre-school Education: Energy

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[98759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support will be made available to Early Years settings after the rise of the energy price cap in April 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is committed to carrying out a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to inform decisions on future support after March 2023. Over the course of the review, the Government will be engaging widely to understand those who are most in need of further support. The Government cannot confirm which sectors will receive further support after 31st March 2023 until the review has concluded. The findings of the review will be published by the 31st December 2022.

■ Public Houses: Shropshire

Mark Pritchard:

[\[98746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) independent and chain pubs, (b) breweries and (c) distilleries in (i) Shropshire, (ii) Telford and (iii) Wrekin.

Kevin Hollinrake:

This Department is working with the Hospitality Sector Council to deliver on our Hospitality Strategy to improve the resilience of hospitality businesses, including pubs and breweries across the UK.

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

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

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced in his Autumn Statement a range of measures to support firms with business rates worth £13.6 billion over the next 5 years, including increased and extended Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) relief. This is the most generous in year business rates relief in over 30 years, outside of Covid-19 support.

■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson:

[101715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much grant funding the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has provided to public sector bodies in Sefton Central constituency since the establishment of that scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not hold a breakdown of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding by constituency. Lists of all projects funded through the scheme can be found on the scheme's gov.uk page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-sector-decarbonisation-scheme>.

■ Recovery Loan Scheme

Dan Carden:

[101774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to provide further transparency over which companies received Coronavirus support loans; and if he will make a statement.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Arguments regarding the possible disclosure of individual details Bounce Back Loan scheme borrowers have now been heard at First Tier Tribunal.

The Tribunal's decision on this issue is expected in due course and it would be inappropriate to comment further until that decision is received.

Where required under the EU State aid rules, information about recipients of finance under the Covid-19 loan guarantee schemes has been published on the European Commission's State Aid Transparency Public Search database, available here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/competition/transparency/public?lang=en>. Similarly, some information has been reported on the UK Government's transparency database where required under the UK's domestic subsidy control regime: <https://searchforuksubsidies.beis.gov.uk/>.

■ Recovery Loan Scheme: Fraud

Dan Carden:

[101773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the level of potential fraud in Coronavirus loan support schemes; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of anti-fraud safeguards that were in place.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The latest estimates of potential fraud and error loss in the Government's Covid-19 loan schemes can be found in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2021-2022, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beis-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>.

For the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), from the outset lenders were required to make and maintain appropriate anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks for all new customer applicants. Following launch, the British Business Bank (BBB) implemented a series of additional processes to support lenders' fraud prevention efforts. This included the duplicate application check and the implementation of fraud risk assessment procedures and the Government Counter Fraud Function's fraud analytics programme.

Lenders report that they prevented £2.2 billion in potentially fraudulent applications during the life of the scheme.

Dan Carden:[\[101775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to recover coronavirus support loans that were fraudulently obtained; and if he will make a statement.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is committed to bearing down on fraud in the Covid-19 loan schemes and we are working with lenders, law enforcement, and partners to recover fraudulently obtained loans.

At the Spring Statement 2022, my Rt. Hon Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer announced almost £50 million of additional funding for counter-fraud work, of which over half related to Bounce Back Loans.

As of October 2022, Insolvency Service action on Covid-19 support scheme fraud has resulted in 391 director disqualifications and 119 bankruptcy restrictions, the majority relating to BBLs fraud. They have also achieved 2 criminal prosecutions. The National Investigation Service (NATIS) have a total recoveries target of £6 million this financial year and have recovered £5.8 million to date.

It should be noted the estimate of suspected fraud and error loss has been revised downward between the Department's Annual Reports and Accounts 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, now with a realised lifetime fraud and error loss estimate of 4.24%.

■ Research: Investment**Chi Onwurah:**[\[101725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December 2022 to Question 97527 on Research: Investment, what assessment he has made of the impact of not having regional data on funding for science.

George Freeman:

The ONS November 2022 R&D expenditure data release allows comparison of overall R&D expenditure in London, the South East and the East of England with that in other parts of England and the UK, which helps track progress. Furthermore, ONS and BEIS are working towards more granular regional data on R&D in 2023, such as regional breakdowns of government R&D funding.

■ **Small Businesses: Washington and Sunderland West****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[101704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many small and medium-sized enterprises in Washington and Sunderland West constituency received Government funding for support during the cost of living crisis in 2022.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses.

Businesses in Washington and Sunderland will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, cut to fuel duty for 12 months and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, to protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter.

Support is also available to SMEs across the UK through the Recovery Loan Scheme and the Start Up loan scheme which has provided – 126 SMEs in Washington and Sunderland West loans to the value of £1,096,634 as of October 2022.

■ **Solar Power: Parking****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[98870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of mandating car parks over a certain size to be covered in solar panels.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is pleased to see examples of solar installations in UK car parks such as in York, Glasgow and Leeds and is considering how to encourage more.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Blood: Contamination****Dan Carden:**[\[98836\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report by Sir Robert Francis KC entitled Compensation and Redress for the Victims of Infected Blood: Recommendations for a Framework, published on 7 June 2022, whether the Government accepts recommendation 1 of the report on a publicly funded compensation scheme.

Dan Carden:

[\[98837\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report by Sir Robert Francis KC entitled Compensation and Redress for the Victims of Infected Blood: Recommendations for a Framework, published on 7 June 2022, if he will take immediate steps, with Cabinet colleagues, to begin developing a compensation framework.

Dan Carden:

[\[98838\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report by Sir Robert Francis KC entitled Compensation and Redress for the Victims of Infected Blood: Recommendations for a Framework, published on 7 June 2022, if the Government will take steps to work in partnership with (a) members of the infected blood community, (b) their legal representatives and (c) other stakeholders to (i) develop a compensation framework quickly and (ii) consider what steps can be taken to minimise potential sources of distress in the compensation process.

Dan Carden:

[\[98844\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the report by Sir Robert Francis KC entitled Compensation and Redress for the Victims of Infected Blood, Recommendations for a Framework, published on 7 June 2022, what his planned timetable is for the publication of the Government response to that report.

Jeremy Quin:

I recognise the importance of the issue and the desire of the honourable Member to receive an update on Government work in relation to Sir Robert Francis' recommendations.

It is my intention to provide an update to the House as soon as possible.

■ **Cabinet Office: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark:

[\[100919\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many meetings (a) they and (b) other Ministers in their Department have had with the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from (i) 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022, (ii) 1 March to 31 May 2022 and (iii) 1 June to 31 August 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

■ **Infected Blood Compensation Framework Study**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[101806\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government will publish its complete response to the Sir Robert Francis KC Infected Blood Compensation Study before Christmas this year,.

Jeremy Quin:

I recognise the importance of the issue and the desire of the honourable lady to receive an update on Government work in relation to Sir Robert Francis' recommendation.

It is my intention to provide an update to the House as soon as possible.

■ Infected Blood Inquiry**Damien Moore:**[\[99982\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timelines is for the implementation of the remaining 18 recommendations made by Sir Robert Francis QC in the Interim Report on the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Jeremy Quin:

I recognise the importance of the issue and the desire of the honourable Member to receive an update on Government work in relation to Sir Robert Francis' recommendation.

It is my intention to provide an update to the House as soon as possible.

■ Prime Minister: Accountancy**John Cryer:**[\[99716\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all contracts, consultancies or other services placed with the accountancy firms (i) Deloitte & Touche, (ii) Ernst & Young, (iii) KPMG and (iv) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by the office of the Prime Minister.

Alex Burghart:

Details of Government contracts awarded from 2011 above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder.

Cabinet Office does not hold the historic data centrally as it would involve a disproportionate amount of costs and time to collate the information. A new contract database, Atamis, has been purchased and is now live. This is used to capture all information on current contracts which started on or after January 2022 and all future contracts.

DEFENCE**■ Defence Equipment: Procurement****John Healey:**[\[98701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 45 of the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-2032, published in November 2022, what the 19 projects with aggregate forecast cost increases are; and what the cost increases are for each programme.

Alex Chalk:

The 19 projects in the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-2032 with aggregate forecast cost increases are outlined in the table below with the total cost variation to completion listed. All figures are as at 31 March 2022.

PROJECT	TOTAL COST VARIATION TO COMPLETION (£MILLION)
1 AJAX (Specialist Vehicles)	24
2 Apache Capability Sustainment Programme	-10
3 Challenger Life Extension Programme	-14
4 E7 Wedgetail	-194
5 Brimstone Capability Sustainment Programme	1
6 Brimstone 3B	11
7 Spear Capability 3	-5
8 ASRAAM Sustainment (MG1)	1
9 Marshall	-19
10 Mechanised Infantry Vehicle (MIV)	543
11 Protector	-15
12 Sky Sabre	0
13 Type 26 Frigates	259
14 Type 31 Frigates	2
15 Astute Boats 4-7	10
16 Core Production Capability	46
17 Dreadnought	0
18 New Style of IT (Deployed)	35
19 SKYNET 6A	-28
Total	647

The AJAX (Specialist Vehicles) figure excludes the initial support contract forecasted costs

John Healey:

[\[98702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 45 of the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-2032, published in November 2022, what the eight projects within the PPST 22 population are that hold a FOREX risk allocation outside of the Approved Budgetary Level.

Alex Chalk:

There are currently seven projects within the PPST population with a separate foreign exchange rate (FOREX) risk provision held outside of their approvals to deal with potential FOREX volatility.

As at March 22 these are:

- Apache
- E7 Wedge Tail
- Protector
- Challenger Life Extension Programme
- Brimstone 3B
- Spear Capability 3
- Mechanised Infantry Vehicle

John Healey:

[\[98703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 44 of the Defence Equipment Plan 2022-2032, published in November 2022, what the eleven projects reporting a change in their approved in service date are; and what the (a) initial and (b) current approved in service dates are for each project.

Alex Chalk:

The eleven projects reporting a change in their approved In-Service date are listed in the table below along with their expected and current approved In-Service Dates.

PROJECT	EXPECTED IN-SERVICE DATE AT APPROVAL	CURRENT FORECAST IN-SERVICE DATE
AJAX (Specialist Vehicles)	Jul-20	<i>Not yet determined</i>
Apache Capability Sustainment Programme	Apr-22	May-23
E7 Wedgetail	Dec-23	Mar-24
Brimstone Capability Sustainment Programme	Oct-22	Feb-25
ASRAAM Sustainment (MG1)	Nov-18	Apr-22
Marshall	Feb-17	Jan-21

PROJECT	EXPECTED IN-SERVICE DATE AT APPROVAL	CURRENT FORECAST IN-SERVICE DATE
Protector	Jul-21	Nov-23
Sky Sabre	Mar-20	Aug-21
Type 26 Frigates	Oct-27	Oct-28
Core Production Capability	Jun-26	Oct-25
New Style of IT (Deployed)	Jun-19	Dec-21

■ Electronic Warfare: Recruitment

Chris Evans:

[\[98706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence by Charlie Forte to the Public Accounts Committee on 14 November 2022, HC 727, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the speed of the recruitment process on potential recruits.

Alex Chalk:

The Department acknowledge that there are undoubtedly areas at each stage of the recruitment process pertaining to speed that require improvement. The MOD are confident that these will help improve our ability to retain potential recruits throughout the process. Areas for improvement include processing of applications prior to interview, the vetting process, and the onboarding process. We are completing in-depth analysis of areas within our control to identify where we can shorten the timelines and working with other Government Departments on those outside of our control, such as the vetting process.

■ HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance

John Healey:

[\[101693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to 1 November 2022 to Question 69500 on HMS Prince of Wales: Repairs and Maintenance, whether the timetables for repairs of HMS Prince of Wales have been determined; and on what date he expects the work to repair the carrier will be completed.

Alex Chalk:

Timelines for the repairs to HMS PRINCE OF WALES have not yet been determined as investigations to establish the extent of the work required are still ongoing.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Broadband: Universal Service Obligation****Ian Lavery:**[\[99850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure the future of the Universal Service Obligation for broadband.

Julia Lopez:

The broadband Universal service Obligation (USO) was launched in March 2020 and acts as a 'digital safety net' providing every premises with the legal right to request a decent broadband service providing speeds of at least 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload.

As the independent regulator, it is the responsibility of Ofcom to administer and monitor the broadband USO and ensure that the two Universal Service Providers comply with the obligations placed on them.

As set out in the *Communications Act 2003*, the Secretary of State must give Ofcom a direction to review the broadband USO once at least 75% of premises in the United Kingdom, on the basis of Ofcom's data, take up a broadband service with a download speed of at least 30 megabits per second. As of September 2021 Ofcom reported that 69% of premises in the UK had taken up a superfast broadband service.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Chief Scientific Advisers**Greg Clark:**[\[100916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many meetings (a) they and (b) other Ministers in their Department have had with the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from (i) 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022, (ii) 1 March to 31 May 2022 and (iii) 1 June to 31 August 2022.

Julia Lopez:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

■ Television Licences: Non-payment**Lee Anderson:**[\[101060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pensioners have been prosecuted for non-payment of the TV Licence fee in each of the last three years.

Julia Lopez:

The requirement to hold, and pay for, a TV Licence is set out in the *Communications Act 2003* and the *Communications (Television Licensing) Regulations 2004*.

The Ministry of Justice currently publishes the number of prosecutions, convictions and sentencing outcomes for the non-payment of TV licence fees annually as part of

their criminal justice statistics quarterly publications, which can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics-quarterly>

Figures for each year since 2005 up to 2022 are available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool, and can be found in the following dataset:

- 2018-2022:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1118314/outcomes-by-offence-june-2022.xlsx

To view the relevant figures in these tables, select '191A Television licence evasion' in the Offence filter. These figures can be refined further by age to identify an age range of 70+, it is impossible to provide the data for 'pensioners' as that is a diverse group that cannot be filtered purely by age.

The data for individuals aged 70+ are the following:

- 2022 - 260 proceeded against & 217 sentenced
- 2021 - 238 proceeded against & 207 sentenced
- 2022 - 329 proceeded against & 288 sentenced

Alternative data does also show no Over 75s have been prosecuted and that none of the prosecutions have resulted in custodial sentences.

■ Tourism: Coronavirus

Brandon Lewis:

[\[97514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has conducted economic impact assessments of the effect of covid-19 on the UK tourist industry (a) regionally and (b) nationally.

Stuart Andrew:

DCMS has closely monitored the impact of the pandemic using a mix of external data sources, as well as commissioning [independent assessments and forecasts](#). This includes analysis of regional-level differences as well as national impact.

VisitBritain calculated that, on a national level, the estimated combined loss to the UK economy in 2020 & 2021 was £147 billion, of which inbound loss was £50 billion and UK-wide domestic loss was £97 billion.

Identifying that tourism was one of the sectors of the economy hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK was one of the first countries to set out a post-Covid [Tourism Recovery Plan](#) in summer 2021 and to remove the barriers to both domestic and international visitors. The Department will continue to monitor impact as part of assessing progress against its objectives set out in the Tourism Recovery Plan.

EDUCATION**■ Adoption and Children in Care: Mental Health Services****Rachael Maskell:**[\[97719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that children in (a) care, (b) kinship care arrangements and (c) post-adoption who have experienced trauma can access trauma services within the healthcare system.

Claire Coutinho:

The department recognises the importance of securing appropriate support for children who have experienced trauma, which may include children in care, kinship care or who have been adopted.

The healthcare system is available to all children, and parents and carers will be able to receive appropriate advice on how to access this, including support for trauma-related issues as appropriate.

Local authorities have a duty to promote the welfare of all looked-after children. They are responsible for carrying out an annual health assessment for every child in the care system to produce a health plan that addresses the child's physical, emotional, and mental health needs. Foster carers should be involved in drawing up the health plan as part of the overall care plan for their foster children. Foster carers should also be supported by named health professionals for looked-after children in accessing services that the child needs, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service consultations.

For adopted children and children under Special Guardianship orders who were previously in care, the Adoption Support Fund is designed to complement the healthcare system and provide support for those who are suffering trauma and attachment issues. An assessment of need will be undertaken beforehand, to ensure that the most appropriate support is provided.

■ Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board**Munira Wilson:**[\[101801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, why she has decided to close the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board.

Claire Coutinho:

Since the formation of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB), the adoption and special guardianship landscape has changed significantly. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care called for a reset of the whole system. As we move into a different phase of reform across the whole of children's social care, it is the right decision to close the ASGLB, which has fulfilled its remit.

To drive improvements in adoption practice across the country, the department now has 32 Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) working collectively and with the wider

sector to deliver on the National Adoption Strategy, supported by £19.5 million in government funding. The department believes this is the right structure to deliver change.

The Care Review also recommends supporting a wider cohort of kinship carers. This recommendation goes beyond the scope and current remit of the ASGLB. The department is working up proposals around kinship care that fit with wider governance arrangements that are being developed to deliver the Care Review recommendations. The government's implementation plan will be published early in the New Year.

■ BTEC Qualifications: Finance

Karin Smyth:

[\[99880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the withdrawal of funding for some BTEC courses on the number of (a) 16-to-19 year olds and (b) other adults taking up a post-16 qualification in the next five years.

Robert Halfon:

As part of the post-16 qualifications review, the department has considered the available evidence about outcomes for students who have taken BTECs as well as other Applied General qualifications (AGQs).

The evidence suggests that, after taking into account a student's background characteristics and prior attainment, those who followed an A level only route generally experienced better outcomes in terms of attainment and future employment impacts. Considering access to higher education and reformed AGQs, the review found that across different prior attainment bandings, students with A levels were consistently more likely to enter higher education than those holding AGQs. For those with the lowest prior attainment, mixed A level and AGQ programmes were slightly more likely to lead to higher education than those with a study programme consisting of A levels.

Therefore, the department will continue to fund some alternative level 3 qualifications, including BTECs where they do not overlap with A levels or T Levels, and where they meet the new quality criteria being implemented as part of the funding approval process for 2025 and beyond, details of which will be published in due course. Qualifications such as BTECs will continue to play an important role for 16 to 19-year-olds and adults. This includes for students taking these qualifications in mixed programmes alongside A levels or as an alternative programme in areas that may be less well-served by A levels or T Levels.

The updated impact assessment published alongside the response to the second stage consultation looked at the potential impact of the review including the removal of funding for some BTEC qualifications on both 16 to 19-year-old and adult students, including those with protected characteristics. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-in-england>.

■ **Childcare: Tax Allowances**

Mr Robin Walker:

[98735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of parents took up the childcare offer (a) for two-year-olds, (b) of 15 hours for three- and four-year-olds and (c) of 30 hours for three- and four-year-olds, in each of the last five years.

Claire Coutinho:

Data relating to government-funded early education and childcare is published in the annual Education provision: children under 5 years of age statistical release:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5>.

The figures requested for (a) and (b) can be found at the following link:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c630228b-c8d7-4fbf-9467-08dacc5b2c16>.

The number of children registered for (c) can be found at the following link:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/c212be1a-6230-457c-9468-08dacc5b2c16>.

Three to four-year-olds whose parents (or the sole parent in a lone parent household) work at least sixteen hours a week at national minimum wage or living wage, but earn under £100,000 per year, are eligible for this extended offer of thirty hours of childcare. Based on the department's analyses of data from various surveys, an estimated four in five eligible children took up the offer in the most recent year.

■ **Children in Care**

Rachael Maskell:

[97720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to remove (a) GDPR and (b) other barriers to data sharing between agencies caring for children in the social care system.

Claire Coutinho:

The department has committed to writing a report on the government's policy in relation to the sharing of information by safeguarding partners, including the extent to which a consistent identifier should be used for each child. This report will set out the real and perceived barriers that practitioners experience when seeking to share data between agencies caring for children in the social care system and will recommend ways to overcome them. The report is due to be published in summer 2023.

■ Educational Psychology: Labour Turnover and Pay

Zarah Sultana:

[\[101805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to help ensure educational psychologists' pay is increased in line with inflation; what steps her Department is taking to help ensure local councils recruit and retain sufficient numbers of educational psychologists to support children with special educational needs and disabilities; and if she will take steps to help ensure that the pay of public sector jobs relating to her Department's remit is increased in line with inflation.

Claire Coutinho:

In November 2022, the department announced an investment of £21 million to train 400 more educational psychologists. The first cohort of trainees will start their courses in 2024, graduate and enter the workforce in 2027, continuing the supply of educational psychologists into local authorities. This is in addition to £10 million announced earlier this year, which will train over 200 more educational psychologists beginning their courses in September 2023, and graduate and enter the local authority workforce in 2026.

The specific employment terms for educational psychologists, including pay, are governed by the education psychologist's contract of employment with their employer.

The department recognises the concern faced by educational psychologists in the context of cost of living challenges.

The government has announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households, providing them with £12 billion direct support in 2023/24. This is on top of the £37 billion of cost of living support provided by the Government this year, including help for workers to keep more of what they earn through changes to the personal tax system and providing eligible households with a £400 discount on their energy bill this autumn and winter.

■ Pre-school Education: Training

Mr Robin Walker:

[\[98736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of investing in greater specialist training for the identification of additional needs amongst the early years workforce.

Claire Coutinho:

The government is investing up to £180 million in early years COVID-19 recovery. This is a package of training, qualifications and targeted support for the early years sector to support the learning and development of the youngest and most disadvantaged children. This includes a focus on child development, communication and language, early maths and personal, social and emotional development.

The early years Professional Development Programme has already provided 1,300 early years professionals with such training and up to 10,000 more staff will be

trained in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years. We will also train up to 5,000 early years staff and childminders to become qualified Special Educational Needs Coordinators.

In addition, we have invested £17 million in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention, improving the language skills of an estimated 90,000 children in reception classes. This proven, evidence-based programme targets children needing extra support with their speech and language development and is proven to help them make around 3 months of additional progress. Two thirds of primary schools (over 11,000) signed up, and the majority of those had Free School Meal rates above the national average.

■ Public Transport: Gender Based Violence

David Linden:

[\[99961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made for the implications of her policies of Recommendation 10 of the report published in March 2022 by the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Recommendation 10 of this report proposes the development of a national education initiative in schools which educates young people on ways they can play a role in preventing violence against women and girls.

Schools and colleges have a critical role to play in protecting children and keeping them safe. Since September 2020, relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) has been a statutory part of the curriculum. RSHE teaches pupils what healthy relationships look like, and the concepts of, and laws relating to, all forms of abuse. The RSHE statutory guidance also advises schools to be aware of issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and gender stereotypes, and to take positive action to tackle these issues. The RSHE guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver RSHE, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of their pupils. Some schools choose to deliver programmes which include lessons on how to be an active bystander. Rape, harassment, and abuse are explicitly taught about in the 'Being Safe' topic. Schools should teach pupils the knowledge they need to recognise and report abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Pupils should know how to report concerns and seek advice when they suspect or know that something is wrong.

Following the Ofsted Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges, the Department is producing non-statutory guidance that will focus on how to teach

RSHE to prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence. This guidance is to be published in 2023.

■ Special Educational Needs

Kate Osamor:

[\[97657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help increase the number of SEND school places available in mainstream education.

Claire Coutinho:

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

As part of this commitment, in March 2022 the department announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations amounting to over £1.4 billion of new investment, focused on the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. Local authorities can use this funding to work with any school or institution in their area, and the department encourages them to consider prioritising projects that increase available placements for children and young people with education, health and care plans in mainstream settings, including new SEN units or resourced provisions. However, it is ultimately up to local authorities to determine how to best use their funding to address their local priorities.

Mr Robin Walker:

[\[98734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on the delivery of measures proposed by the Right Support, Right Place, Right Time Green Paper.

Claire Coutinho:

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) 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 SEND 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 in early 2023.

Ahead of the Improvement Plan being published, we are taking forward two additional measures to support children with SEND. The first is an investment of £21 million into training 400 more educational psychologists, who play a critical role in the educational support available to children with SEND. The second is the extension of

a training programme for up to 150 more schools, for teachers to use assistive technology to better support their pupils with SEND.

These measures will continue to support the system in delivering change and continue to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and those who need AP.

Mr Robin Walker:

[\[98741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the viability of upper tier authorities charged with supporting the needs of high needs pupils.

Claire Coutinho:

Following the additional funding increases announced in the Chancellor's recent Autumn Statement, local authorities' high needs funding will be rising to £10.1 billion in 2023/24, an increase of over 50% from the 2019/20 allocations. This extra funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The department recognises that a number of local authorities have struggled to manage their high needs systems sustainably in recent years, and have accrued Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits as a result. Following investment through the Spending Review 2021, the department is running three programmes aimed at helping local authorities with the financial sustainability of their high needs systems., Support and intervention is tailored to the severity of the problems authorities are facing. Those with the highest percentage DSG deficits have been invited to the Safety Valve intervention programme. Those with substantial, but less severe deficits, have been invited to join the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. Other local authorities are being contacted by the Education and Skills Funding Association.

In 2020, the government also introduced a statutory override which separates local authorities' DSG deficits from their wider financial position. The statutory override was put in place for a period of three years, up to March 2023, and meant that local authorities' DSG deficits could be separated from their wider accounts.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities understand that a decision on the DSG statutory override needs to be communicated to the sector as soon as possible to provide certainty for the next – and future - financial years. An announcement will be made shortly.

■ **Training: Wallasey**

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[101698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on improving skills training in Wallasey constituency.

Robert Halfon:

The department regularly discusses skills matters with other government departments, including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, but not specifically about individual constituencies.

The department is investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over the Parliament to ensure people across the country, including in Wallasey, have access to the skills they need to build a fulfilling career in jobs the economy needs.

The department has boosted funding by an extra £1.6 billion for 16 to 19 education in 2024/25 compared with 2021/22. This is the biggest increase in 16 to 19 funding in a decade and will help to fund the additional students anticipated in the system, 40 extra hours per student, and an affordable increase in funding rates per 16 to 19 student.

This additional funding will help providers such as Wirral Metropolitan College, which is a very strong General Further Education College serving the Wallasey area. Their curriculum offer includes T Levels, apprenticeships, an extensive range of qualifications from entry level to higher education, and adult education programmes. Their provision is shaped in collaboration with local employers to ensure it meets local skills needs and the college is also a strategic partner in the delivery of the Wirral Waters project, which enables its learners to access unique learning and employment opportunities.

The college started to offer T Levels in September 2022 and has plans to build this offer in future years, but there are also a number of other local colleges offering T Levels to students in the area since 2021, such as The City of Liverpool College, Hugh Baird College and Birkenhead Sixth Form College.

The department is increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 and supporting employers in all sectors and all areas of the country to use apprenticeships to develop the skilled workforces they need. Since May 2010, there have been a total of 12,940 apprenticeship starts in Wallasey.

The department has introduced the Free Courses for Jobs scheme, which enables adult learners without a level 3 qualification (or learners with any qualification level, but earning below the National Living Wage) to gain a qualification for free. This is serving communities right across the country.

In addition, we have also introduced Skills Bootcamps, which are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with an employer. There are digital Skills Bootcamps based in Wirral which offer training online as well as Skills Bootcamps in other sectors being delivered both online and face to face in the Liverpool region, which Wallasey residents would be eligible to apply for. An example of this is Tech Lancaster's Electronics Skills Bootcamp which is being delivered in Liverpool.

The department is continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) at £1.34 billion in the 2021/22 academic

year. The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London. This includes Liverpool City region which covers Wallasey. This gives Liverpool City Region direct control over adult education provision for their residents and provides the local area with the opportunity to meet local needs.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[902647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to increase prosecution rates for gangs taking part in illegal fishing along the UK coastline.

Mark Spencer:

Defra works closely with the Marine Management Organisation, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, and other organisations to make sure the appropriate arrangements to enforce fisheries regulations are in place to protect English waters. In response to concerns about the targeting of bass in the South West, MMO has stepped up routine compliance and assurance checks. We vehemently condemn any illegal fishing taking place in English waters and work actively with the Joint Maritime Security Centre to provide fisheries enforcement input and share resources such as data and assets in partnership with other departments and agencies with a maritime security remit.

■ Agriculture: Land

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[34984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether class 3B agricultural land is classified as best and most versatile land in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Trudy Harrison:

Best and most versatile agricultural land (BMVAL) is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and Natural England's 'Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land' as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

■ Air Pollution: Chemicals and Metals

Ruth Jones:

[98779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she made of the volumes of (a) chemicals and (b) toxic metals sprayed annually into the atmosphere above the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency carries out an annual assessment of the emissions from Environment Agency regulated industries. This data is published on Gov.UK and the link to the latest data set is [Pollution Inventory - data.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/pollution-inventory)

■ Animals: Antibiotics

Kate Osamor:

[99927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of restricting the use of antibiotics in treatments for animal welfare.

Mark Spencer:

Antibiotics are an essential part of veterinary medicine. Failing to use antibiotics in animals which need them compromises animal health and welfare. The Government's position is that we must reduce the unnecessary use of antibiotics in animals while making sure they can still be used when they are truly needed, to reduce antimicrobial resistance. In the UK, the use of antibiotics in food producing animals has reduced by 55% between 2014 and 2021, and in 2021 we recorded the lowest antibiotic use to date.

■ Avian Influenza

Stella Creasy:

[99824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals (England) (No.2) Order 2006.

Mark Spencer:

The plan is to retain the Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals (England) (No.2) Order 2006 (as amended).

■ Bathing Waters Regulations 2013

Stella Creasy:

[101723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether she plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Bathing Waters Regulations 2013.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its REUL stock to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or

amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Bill, including in relation to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

■ Birds: Conservation

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[98898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's 2021 Birdcrime Report, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the finding that the second-highest amount of raptor persecution incidents occurred in 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

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

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

■ Dangerous Dogs

Jeff Smith: [\[101010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, How much her Department has spent on the enforcement of the [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991] in the last year.

Rebecca Pow:

The police and local authorities are responsible for enforcing the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. Defra has, therefore, not incurred any enforcement costs in the last year.

Jeff Smith: [\[101011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an estimate of the (a) costs to local authorities of maintaining kennels, (b) legal costs of listing a dog on the Index of Exempted Dogs, (c) cost of enforcement by police authorities and (d) other costs of enforcing the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 in the last year.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra does not hold this information. Any information on the costs of kennelling and enforcement associated with dogs seized under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 will be kept by individual local authorities and police forces.

■ Dangerous Dogs: Exemptions

Jeff Smith:

[\[101012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications for dogs to be listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs there were in the last year; and how many of those were (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful.

Rebecca Pow:

Applications to be listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs (“the Index”) are governed by the Dangerous Dogs Exemption Schemes (England and Wales) Order 2015. The person in charge of a prohibited dog may only apply for the dog to be listed on the Index if the court has granted a contingent destruction order under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 in relation to a prohibited dog. The person in charge of the dog must fulfil a number of conditions for the dog to be listed on the Index, including ensuring that the dog is neutered, microchipped and that they have a policy of third-party insurance in respect of the dog that is to be exempted. Defra will list the dog on the Index and issue the applicant with a Certificate of Exemption following receipt of a completed application form, evidence showing that the conditions have been met and payment of the fee within the specified period. In 2021, 129 applications were processed successfully and 17 applications were not successful.

■ Disease Control

Kate Osamor:

[\[99926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to slow the spread of superbugs.

Mark Spencer:

Defra is a co-signatory with the Department of Health and Social Care of the UK's Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 5 year National Action Plan (2019-2024) and the UK's 20 year Vision to Contain and Control AMR by 2040. The UK is considered a global leader on AMR.

The UK takes a One Health, holistic approach, working together to control the emergence and spread of resistant bacteria (also known as superbugs), by reducing antibiotic use in humans and animals and limiting the spread of resistant bacteria through the environment. In the UK, the use of antibiotics in food producing animals has reduced by 55% between 2014 and 2021, and in 2021 we recorded the lowest antibiotic use to date. Over the same period, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) have reported an overall trend of decreasing antimicrobial resistance in bacteria from animals.

The UK Government funded the Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATHSAFE) programme last year, which brings together partners to better understand AMR and gather tracking and monitoring data. Over the years the government has supported several stewardship programmes to encourage the responsible use of antibiotics in humans and animals. Defra also coordinated the Annual Health and Welfare Review which is the first step farmers can take on the

government's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway introducing a vet visit for farmers on a yearly basis. These programmes aim to reduce the amount of medicine used on endemic diseases in the long term, helping in the fight against superbugs.

■ Eggs: Prices

Tim Farron: [\[98742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with egg producers on the price of chicken eggs.

Mark Spencer:

Defra officials meet regularly with the British Egg Industry Council, the National Farmers' Union, and the British Free Range Egg Producers' Association.

I recently hosted an egg industry roundtable with representatives from across the UK egg supply chain, to consider the challenges currently facing the industry.

■ Eggs: Supermarkets

Tim Farron: [\[98743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of chicken eggs sold in UK supermarkets that were laid abroad.

Mark Spencer:

The UK egg industry operates in an open market and is both resilient and robust. We are currently around 92% self-sufficient in eggs and there are currently around 38 million laying hens across the country. There are also tried and tested routes for supplementing domestic production with imports, when necessary.

Defra continues to monitor levels of imports through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which is responsible for monitoring UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade, and recent developments.

■ Farmers: Mental Health Services

Carla Lockhart: [\[78899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has taken recent steps with Cabinet colleagues to help increase awareness of mental health support organisations in the farming community, in the context of increased pressures on poultry farmers following the avian flu outbreak.

Mark Spencer:

The scale of Avian Influenza (AI) outbreaks occurring in the UK and Europe is unprecedented and we recognise that these outbreaks are very distressing for the individual poultry farmers that are affected and the impact this can have on their mental health. On 28 October we announced a new package of measures to support domestic producers with the impacts of AI. This included changes to the compensation scheme allowing compensation to be paid to farmers from the outset

of planned culling rather than at the end. In consultation with the Food Standards Agency, an easement to marketing rules is also being introduced in England to give producers certainty over business planning.

Defra has established the Farmer Welfare Forum which brings together England's largest farming welfare organisations, many of which provide mental health support to the agricultural industry. AI and its impact on poultry farmers has been discussed at recent meetings of this forum and we are working together to ensure farmers are aware of what support is available.

Defra continues to monitor the AI situation and to work closely with the poultry sector and farming welfare organisations.

■ Farms: Tenants

Daniel Zeichner: [\[98796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on taking steps to implement the recommendations on taxation in the report by the Tenancy Working Group entitled The Rock Review, published on 13 October 2022.

Mark Spencer:

Defra is working closely with HM Treasury to consider the recommendations on taxation made in the Rock Review.

Dan Jarvis: [\[98895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many upland farmers are enrolled in the pilot of the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

Mark Spencer:

As of 30th November 2022, there were 834 farmers taking part in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) Pilot scheme. Using the criteria of having at least one land parcel within the categorisation of being in a Less Favoured Area, there are 109 upland farmers.

■ Livestock: Drug Resistance

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[98674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 1 June 2022 to Question 6702 on Poultry: Factory Farming, whether she has made a recent assessment of the implications for her policies of levels of antimicrobial resistance in (a) cattle and (b) poultry in UK farms.

Mark Spencer:

Our annual UK report on [Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance, Sales and Surveillance](#) (UK-VARSS 2021) was published on 8th November 2022, and presents the findings of our monitoring programmes on veterinary antibiotic sales, usage and resistance.

■ Natural England

Tim Farron: [\[78668\]](#)

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

Trudy Harrison:

The following table sets out the budgets for Natural England 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	120,411	106,131	95,488	87,112	86,215	95,754	160,368	143,658

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.

■ Pigs: Animal Housing

Dame Caroline Dinéage: [\[98724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to consult on the ending of farrowing crates for pigs in context of the EU Commission's announcement of intention to propose legislation in that area.

Mark Spencer:

The Government is committed to exploring the phasing out of farrowing crates, supporting the industry to do so in a way which underpins UK food production and does not have unintended animal welfare or business impacts.

■ Poultry

Tim Farron: [\[98740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the number of egg laying chicken flock in the UK.

Mark Spencer:

We estimate the current size of the egg laying chicken flock in the UK is just under 38 million hens.

■ **Seasonal Workers: Conditions of Employment**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[98896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether there are guaranteed minimum hours of work for people on the agricultural Seasonal Worker visa working in horticulture.

Mark Spencer:

All recruitment operators for the Seasonal Workers Visa Route offer a guaranteed minimum number of hours for seasonal migrant workers, with most working in excess of these hours. Recruitment operators can transfer seasonal workers between farms to ensure these minimum hours are met and they also have welfare measures in place to ensure workers are not left without support.

■ **Water Companies: Accountability**

John McNally:

[\[97618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to hold incumbent water companies accountable for failures to address storm overflows and leakages.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has made it clear that water companies must urgently tackle sewage overflows. This is set out in the Storm Overflows Reduction Plan, which represents the largest investment programme in water company history. Through increased monitoring and reporting requirements introduced in the Environment Act 2021, and priorities set through Ofwat as part of the Strategic Policy Statement to Ofwat, regulators and government will hold water companies to account. The Environment Agency and Ofwat have recently launched the largest criminal and civil investigations into water company sewage discharges ever, at over 2200 treatment works, following new data coming to light as a result of increased monitoring. Since 2015, the Environment Agency and Ofwat have brought 59 prosecutions against water companies, securing fines of over £144 million.

Water companies have performance commitments set by Ofwat that they need to meet. These include leakage and wastewater treatment work compliance. They face automatic financial penalties when these are missed. In November, Ofwat announced that almost £135 million would be returned to customers as a result of companies underperforming against their performance commitments.

■ **Zane Gbangbola**

Kwasi Kwarteng:

[\[98840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of ordering an Independent Panel Inquiry into the death of Zane Gbangbola during the floods in February 2014.

Rebecca Pow:

The Surrey Senior Coroner has carried out a full investigation into the sad circumstances surrounding Zane Gbangbola's death, taking into account a considerable amount of evidence. The Coroner, as an independent judicial office holder, drew his own conclusions based on this evidence.

If there is a belief that the evidence was not considered properly during the original inquest, or that there is new evidence available, an application can be made to the Attorney General asking her to apply to the High Court to quash the inquest and order a fresh investigation. The High Court would take this course of action if it believed that it would be in the interests of justice. We are not aware that any such application has been made.

I believe that this remains the proper process to follow. An assessment of the merits of an inquiry should be made at the appropriate time if, and when, the legal processes have been exhausted.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Ascension Island: Immigration**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[98680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the right of abode on Ascension Island.

David Rutley:

There is no right of abode on Ascension Island; those who are on island must have an employment contract or be a dependent of someone with an employment contract. There are no plans to review this policy.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Protected Areas

Andrew Rosindell: [\[98677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department has spent on the maintenance of the marine protected area around the British Indian Ocean Territory in the last 12 month period for which figures are available.

David Rutley:

FCDO provides an annual amount to BIOTA for maintaining the environmental protection and good governance of BIOT. This totals £2.4 million.

■ Chagos Islands: Marine Protected Areas

Andrew Rosindell: [\[98672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the private companies his Department has contracted to protect the Chagos Marine Protected Area in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

FCDO has not contracted any parties. This is the responsibility of BIOTA who assist the Commissioner in the civilian administration of that overseas territory. This is separate to and distinct from the role of the UK Government. BIOTA is committed to the protection of the Chagos Marine Protected Area where the marine biodiversity and environment are exceptional. In doing so, BIOTA look to ensure good governance of the territory, including in contracting any private companies. Full details are commercially sensitive.

Development Aid: Females**David Linden:**[\[99952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of his Department's foreign aid budget was used for programmes which prevent violence against women and girls in the 2022-23 financial year.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Ending violence against women and girls remains a top priority for the Government. Spend for 2022-23 is not yet available, the FCDO's latest estimate of its overall ODA spending for 2022-23 is £7.548 million. In 2021, the UK spent £27.6 million on bilateral funding to end violence against women and girls. Multilateral spend for 2021 is not yet available.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: St Helena**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[98676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times a Minister from his Department has visited St Helena in each of the last 10 years.

David Rutley:

There has not been a visit by a Minister from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to St Helena in the last 10 years. St Helena is one of the most remote inhabited islands in the world and travel to St Helena was restricted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lord Goldsmith met with St Helena's Chief Minister in London on 2 November 2022.

International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief**Zarah Sultana:**[\[101802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the policy paper entitled Statement on freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, published on 7 July 2022, for what reason references to (a) sexual and reproductive health and rights and (b) bodily autonomy were removed from the original Statement; and if he will reinstate the original version of that Statement.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is committed to defending and promoting universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and will continue working with other countries to protect and further gender equality in international agreements. The UK continues to fund, support and lead on initiatives related to promoting gender equality including SRHR, Women, Peace and Security and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

■ **Iran: Israel****Scott Benton:**[\[95953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of reports that the Islamic revolutionary guard corps launched an explosive drone at an oil tanker off the coast of Oman.

David Rutley:

The UK condemns the recent drone attack on MV PACIFIC ZIRCON. We remain committed to assuring the safety of shipping in the Middle East region, including through the Gulf of Oman. The UK is a member of the International Maritime Security Construct, along with several Gulf partners, which addresses the threat in the region by providing reassurance to commercial shipping and deterring further threats. We note recent reporting that Iran may be behind the attack. We will work with partners to ensure that those responsible are held to account.

■ **Jordan and South Sudan: Sexual Offences****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[99791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to International Ministerial Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative 2022: national commitments, published on 29 November 2022, whether there are plans to publish national commitments from (a) South Sudan and (b) Jordan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Conference (28-29 November 2022) was a key opportunity to turn up the dial on the global response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

The UK launched a new Political Declaration at the conference to strengthen the global response to CRSV. Endorsing countries were invited to make commitments outlining action they will take on CRSV. We have received 54 endorsements and 40 national commitments so far. The national commitments from Jordan and South Sudan are now available on GOV.UK

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflict-related-sexual-violence-political-declaration-at-the-2022-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative-conference/international-ministerial-conference-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative-2022-national-commitments>).

■ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Nutrition

David Mundell:

[\[98757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on integrating the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's policy marker on nutrition into its portfolio.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is committed to integrating nutrition objectives and interventions across multiple sectors including health, humanitarian, women and girls, climate and economic development partnerships. The OECD Nutrition Policy Marker is now embedded in our systems to ensure that FCDO programmes contributing to nutrition objectives are 'marked' from the point of programme design and for onward funding. This will help to improve tracking accountable nutrition programmes.

■ Palestinians: Charities

Zarah Sultana:

[\[101804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to respond to the United Nation's call for the international community to take immediate and effective steps to protect and sustain the six Palestinian civil society groups that were designated as terrorist organisations by the Government of Israel in October 2021; and if he will (a) make representations to the Israeli authorities to rescind this designation, (b) condemn the steps taken by Israeli forces on these organisations, and (c) review the UK's bilateral relations with Israel.

David Rutley:

We have been clear that we do not support the Israeli government's decision last year to designate six Palestinian non-governmental organization (NGOs) as terrorist organisations. The subsequent raids on the offices of seven Palestinian NGOs, and on St Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah, and arrests of their staff, are equally troubling. We have not changed our approach, based on the information provided by the Government of Israel and we continue to engage with a number of these organisations. Civil society organisations play an important role in upholding human rights and democracy and they must be able to operate freely in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). Officials at the British Embassy Tel Aviv, alongside our European partners, have directly raised our opposition with the Israeli Government on the designations, and made clear our support for Civil Society Organisations in Israel and the OPTs.

■ South Africa and St Helena: Aviation

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has had recent discussions with South African Carrier Airlink on the proposed schedule shift from Johannesburg to Cape Town for flights between St Helena and South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Scheduled flight services resumed on a fortnightly basis in March 2022 following the Covid pandemic during which charter flights were operated. Weekly flights resumed in October 2022.

Financial Aid to St Helena in 2022/23 totals £31,790,000 and includes a contribution towards the costs of operating the airport.

Tristan da Cunha: Fisheries**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[98681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many commercial fishing licences were sold in Tristan da Cunha in (a) each of the years from 2016 to 2021 and (b) 2022 to date; what the monetary value was of such licences; what the flag state was of each of the licenced vessels; and what fish they were licenced to catch.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Following commercial fishing licences were issued by the Government of Tristan da Cunha;

2016 - one licence each for longline fishing of Bluenose Warehou and Tristan Lobster.

2017 to 2019 one licence each per year for longline fishing of Bluenose Warehou, one for trawling of Alfonsino and one for Tristan Lobster.

2020 to 2022 - One licence per year for Tristan Lobster fishing.

The lobster fishing and longline vessels are registered in Belize. The trawling vessel is registered in the Falkland Islands.

The value of these licenses is a commercial matter between the Tristan government and the licensee and as such the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is unable to release this information.

Turkey: Counter-terrorism**Kate Osamor:**[\[99928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives from the Turkish government on Turkey's alleged use of antiterrorism laws to persecute people who dissent in that country.

Leo Docherty:

We are aware of allegations that Turkey has used anti-terror legislation to silence critics of the state. In our regular engagement, we encourage Turkey to ensure that all charges are dealt with in a fair, proportionate and transparent manner. We consistently encourage Turkey to uphold human rights and to live up to its international obligations as a member state of the Council of Europe.

■ **Turks and Caicos Islands: Crime**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made on the reports of a recent significant increase in the level of crime in the Turks and Caicos Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is committed to the security of the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and is supporting their response to the recent increase in serious crime.

UK support has included deployment of a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship and from the National Crime Agency. The UK has committed to a package of longer-term support, including rolling deployments of specialist police officers and an FCDO-funded serious crime team to provide permanent investigative capability to the TCI police.

There are no plans to make a statement at this time.

■ **Turks and Caicos Islands: Youth Custody**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what provision there is for juvenile detention on the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Government have committed to establishing a dedicated juvenile detention and rehabilitation centre in the territory, in addition to planned upgrades to HMP Grand Turk which are expected to begin next year.

Meanwhile, where possible, the TCI Department for Social Development sends any young convicted offenders to specialist centres overseas and any young offenders held on remand in TCI are kept separate from the adult prison population. There are currently no juvenile offenders detained in the TCI.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[99833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of NHS waiting lists on economic inactivity in the UK's working-age population.

Will Quince:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Antidepressants: North East**Chi Onwurah:** [\[98762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report Anxiety nation? Economic insecurity and mental distress in 2020s Britain, published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on 10 November 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the causes of levels of antidepressant prescriptions in (a) Newcastle upon Tyne and (b) the North East.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Better Care Fund**Rachael Maskell:** [\[99908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the amount of funding allocated to the Better Care Fund.

Helen Whately:

The Government recently increased funding for the Better Care Fund (BCF) between 2022 and 2025. An additional £500 million will be allocated to the BCF in 2022/23 to reduce delays in discharging medically fit individuals from hospital. The autumn statement also announced £600 million in 2023/24 and £1 billion in 2024/25 will be allocated in addition to the funding from the 2021 Spending Review.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Sir Stephen Timms:** [\[97409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the consultation on the 10-Year Cancer Plan.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: Following the call for evidence for a ten year cancer plan earlier this year, we received over 5,000 submissions. We are currently reviewing these responses.

Dame Caroline Dinenege: [\[98728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will publish a 10-year Cancer Plan.

Helen Whately:

Following the call for evidence for a ten year cancer plan earlier this year, we received over 5,000 submissions. We are currently reviewing these responses.

Dan Carden: [\[98872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timeline is for the publication of the 10 Year Cancer Plan; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Following the call for evidence for a ten year cancer plan earlier this year, we received over 5,000 submissions. We are currently reviewing these responses.

■ Cancer: Radiotherapy**Dame Caroline Dinenege:**[\[99810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the 10 Year Cancer Plan will include specific plans for expanding the availability of radiotherapy for cancer patients.

Helen Whately:

Following the call for evidence for a ten year cancer plan earlier this year, we received over 5,000 submissions. We are currently reviewing these responses.

■ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease: Medical Treatments**Feryal Clark:**[\[101084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to improve the treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Feryal Clark:[\[101085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to improve the rates of diagnosis of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Helen Whately:

NHS England has established 13 respiratory clinical networks with primary care and community services to manage the diagnosis and treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The Quality Outcomes Framework for 2022/23 includes respiratory indicators in relation to the diagnosis of asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which was fully re-instated in April 2022.

Community diagnostic centres (CDCs) are also delivering additional, digitally connected, diagnostic capacity. This includes a pilot pathway for the diagnosis of undifferentiated breathlessness in a number of CDCs, with a view to wider deployment.

■ Clozapine: Misuse**Peter Gibson:**[\[99991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has provided to Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust to help ensure Clozapine is not misused in patients who consume alcohol or smoke while being prescribed that drug.

Will Quince:

No specific guidance has been issued.

The product information for clozapine for healthcare professionals and patients advises against drinking alcohol during treatment with that drug. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency provided a Drug Safety Update which recommends that blood concentration of clozapine should be monitored for toxicity in clinical situations, such as during smoking cessation or if a patient transfers to e-cigarettes. The British National Formulary advises that dose adjustment may be necessary if a patient's smoking habits change during treatment with clozapine.

■ Community Diagnostic Centres

Alex Cunningham:

[\[98752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 November to Question 75915 on Community Diagnostic Centres: Staff, what diagnostic (a) services and (b) processes are covered by digital diagnostics; and what investment has been made in each.

Will Quince:

Digital diagnostics will ensure that all community diagnostic centres are connected to digitally enabled imaging and pathology networks, which will improve the time taken to obtain results and maximise productivity. The following table shows funding allocated in the Spending Review 2021 settlement for services in digital diagnostics in each year from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Laboratory information management systems and interoperability	£55.18 million	£48.97 million	£46.9 million	£151.05 million
Digital pathology	£41 million	£21.93 million	£13.9 million	£76.83 million
Image sharing	£44.1 million	£37.97 million	£32.84 million	£114.91 million
Home reporting	£7.16 million	£1.15 million	£0.2 million	£8.51 million
iRefer	£9.92 million	£3.02 million	£1.4 million	£14.34 million
Magnetic resonance imaging acceleration	£11.25 million	£0	£0	£11.25 million
Cases under review	£6.69 million	£0	£0	£6.69 million
Total	£175.3 million	£113.04 million	£95.24 million	£383.58 million

Source: NHS England

Note:

Funding is rounded to the nearest £10,000.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[97544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's decision on Evusheld, what steps he is taking to help protect those people acutely vulnerable to covid-19.

Will Quince:

The Government continues to make a range of antiviral treatment options available in the community for patients at highest risk of COVID-19 infection. For those in this cohort who test positive for the virus, antiviral treatments can be accessed through COVID Medicines Delivery Units. Patients identified as potentially eligible for antiviral treatments can also order lateral flow device tests from GOV.UK or NHS 111.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[99829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Novovax vaccine is yet available for use in the UK, and if not, when will it be

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: On 15 September 2022, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised that in exceptional circumstances the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine, Nuvaxovid, may be used when no clinically suitable United Kingdom-approved alternative is available. The deployment of Nuvaxovid commenced on 28 September 2022.

■ **Dementia**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[101689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2022 to Question 94680 on Dementia, what his planned timetable is for the announcement of the appointment of the Chair; and what estimate he has made of when the Chair will begin work.

Helen Whately:

We are in the process of recruiting the chair and hope to be able to announce their appointment in the new year. When they will be able to begin work is subject to pre-appointment checks.

■ Dental Services

Seema Malhotra: [\[100970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to update the NHS Find a Dentist website with information on surgeries accepting new NHS patients.

Seema Malhotra: [\[100971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it mandatory for dental surgeries to report whether they are accepting new NHS patients on the NHS Find a Dentist website.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department announced a package of improvements to the National Health Service dental system in July 2022 and detailed in 'Our plan for patients'. These changes now make it legal requirement for dentists to update their information on the NHS website at least every 90 days to improve information available to patients. This will allow patients to find a dentist who can deliver the care they need and for the system to refer patients to practices with capacity. Compliance will be monitored on the number of dentists updating their availability quarterly through their NHS dental contracts.

■ Dental Services: Hounslow

Seema Malhotra: [\[100972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of dentist surgeries are accepting NHS patients in the London Borough of Hounslow as of 1 December 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Diabetes: Health Services

David Warburton: [\[96629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help tackle regional disparities in (a) access to and (b) experiences of care for people living with diabetes.

Helen Whately:

In 2022/23, £36 million has been allocated to integrated care systems, weighted by local levels of deprivation, to support the restoration of routine diabetes care. The NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme monitors delivery and provides support to systems.

■ Disability: Children

Dan Garden:

[\[99963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has taken recent steps with the (a) Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (b) National Grid to ensure that families with disabled children who rely on life-saving equipment have a guaranteed electricity supply.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: While there have been no specific discussions with the National Grid, we are working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to understand the likelihood of any power outages. Care providers and equipment suppliers support those with long term conditions including families with disabled children to safely use medical equipment at home and in cases where the equipment is disrupted. In a power outage scenario, the Priority Services Register is maintained by electricity network operators to target support to the most vulnerable customers.

■ Disability: Employment Schemes

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[101730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has spent on the Individual Placement and Support programme in each of the last five calendar years.

Maria Caulfield:

This information is not held in the format requested.

■ Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[101022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to provide support to the DEBRA charity.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Research has supported the delivery of 12 studies funded by DEBRA in the last five years.

■ Epilepsy: Females

Feryal Clark:

[\[98915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS Digital and MHRA data publication Medicines and Pregnancy Registry: Antiepileptic use in females aged 0 to 54 in England, what recent steps he has taken to ensure all relevant data is gathered for this publication, including from GPs.

Maria Caulfield:

The Medicines and Pregnancy Registry's publication is an analysis of existing administrative patient data as a proof of concept, to establish the use and value of

these data sets in supporting robust and sustainable medicine registries. The data produced is designed to support the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency in monitoring the success of the valproate pregnancy prevention plan and to enable the health and care system to understand outcomes for women prescribed antiepileptics during pregnancy and their children and improve patient care.

■ Essential Tremor: Magnetic Resonance Imagers

Damien Moore:

[\[99983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to MR-Guided Focussed Ultrasound for Essential Tremor treatment in England.

Helen Whately:

Transcranial magnetic resonance guided focused ultrasound thalamotomy is recommended for the treatment of medication refractory essential tremor, in patients ineligible for deep brain stimulation. NHS England estimates that up to 150 patients per year in England meet the inclusion criteria. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust provide this treatment and can meet the demand.

■ General Dental Council: Standards

Sir John Hayes:

[\[99719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care in its Performance review 2020/21 of the General Dental Council (GDC) on the GDC's timeliness in fitness to practise cases; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator of dentists and dental care professionals in the United Kingdom. The GDC is responsible for investigating concerns about treatment or the conduct of its registrants. The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) is an independent organisation which oversees the work of healthcare regulators for health professionals in the UK and social workers in England. The PSA reports annually on the performance of the regulators, including fitness to practise.

The Department is aware of the PSA's findings and welcomes the GDC's actions to expedite its fitness to practise caseload. The Department is reforming the regulatory frameworks of healthcare professional regulators, including the GDC, to enable regulators to respond to changes in the health and care workforce whilst maintaining public protection. Officials are working with the regulators on legislative changes to allow greater flexibility to modernise fitness to practise processes and improve efficiency.

■ Health Professions: Midlands

Julian Knight:

[\[97603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) doctors and (b) nurses have been recruited by the NHS in the Midlands in each of the last three years.

Will Quince:

The following table shows the headcount number of doctors, nurses and health visitors joining active service in National Health Service hospital trusts and commissioning bodies in the Midlands in each of the last three years.

	JUNE 2019 TO JUNE 2020	JUNE 2020 TO JUNE 2021	JUNE 2021 TO JUNE 2022
Doctors	4,405	3,790	4,186
Nurses and health visitors	7,401	5,512	7,903

Source: NHS Digital, Quarterly Workforce Statistics June 2022

Note:

Joiners can include those returning to active service, such as from maternity leave or career breaks and those newly joining the NHS or joining from a different part of the health and social care system.

■ Health Professions: Recruitment

Alison McGovern:

[\[97530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to increase the recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals in the NHS.

Will Quince:

As of September 2022, there were more than 1.2 million full-time equivalent staff working in the National Health Service. We are also on schedule to deliver an additional 50,000 more nurses by 2024. The NHS People Plan sets out a focus on creating a more modern, compassionate and inclusive culture through improved health and wellbeing, equality and diversity, culture and leadership and flexible working. NHS England continues to support systems to develop tailored health and wellbeing offers to meet the needs of local workforces.

■ Health Professions: Registration

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[97504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of lowering the evidential threshold for the General Medical Council to pass on evidence to the police of malpractice in consultations by unregistered medical professionals from requiring an intent to deceive to recklessness.

Will Quince:

There are no current plans to make a specific assessment. On 24 March 2021, we published 'Regulating healthcare professionals, protecting the public', which sought views on the proposals to reform the regulatory framework for health and care professionals. The Government's response to the consultation will be published shortly and will provide further information, including on proposed changes to the protection of title offences.

Health Services and Social Services: Inspections**Rachael Maskell:**[\[98865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage (a) staff, (b) patients and (c) families of patients to be involved in Care Quality Commission inspections.

Maria Caulfield:

The Care Quality Commission encourages staff and service users and their families to inform the regulator of experiences of care and any concerns using the Give Feedback on Care service, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/give-feedback-on-care>

Those who use services can participate in inspections through the Experts by Experience programme. During inspections, Experts by Experience consult service users and their families, which is used to support the inspectors' judgements.

Health Services: Carers**Karin Smyth:**[\[99885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for NHS (a) assessments and (b) treatments for unpaid carers.

Helen Whately:

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

Health: Screening**Antony Higginbotham:**[\[902627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on increasing the number of (a) scans, (b) diagnostic tests and (c) other health checks provided by the NHS.

Will Quince:

Hardworking NHS Staff delivered 102% of pre-pandemic diagnostic activity in September 2022, and we are well on our way to delivering 120% of pre-pandemic activity.

The Government has committed to invest £2.3 billion in capital to help increase the volume of diagnostic activity and reduce patient waiting times.

Most of this will help increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres to up to 160 by March 2025, expanding and protecting elective planned diagnostic services.

■ Hyperactivity: Children and Young People**Dan Carden:**[\[98839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the waiting times for children and young people accessing treatment for ADHD.

Maria Caulfield:

No recent estimate has been made as this data is not held centrally. While attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be treated using medicine or therapy, a combination of is often recommended. Treatment for ADHD in children and young people is usually arranged by a specialist, such as a paediatrician or psychiatrist, although the condition may be monitored by a general practitioner.

Integrated care systems and National Health Service trusts should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guideline 'Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management', which was published in 2019. This guideline aims to improve the diagnosis of ADHD and the quality of care and support, including access to medication. While the guideline does not specify a timeframe where medication for ADHD should be provided, it explains the considerations for clinicians when deciding to offer medication for children aged five years old and over and for young people.

■ Incontinence: Health Services**Rosie Cooper:**[\[83559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NHS England will publish its planned assessment of adherence to Excellence in Continence Care and its pandemic recovery and restoration plans.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 November 2022]: NHS England will consider next steps on Excellence in Continence Care through its National Bladder and Bowel Health Project. Integrated care boards lead on plans for pandemic recovery and restoration plans, including for continence services.

■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell: [\[99895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the time it would take the Government to implement an effective testing regime in the event of an epidemic or pandemic.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is applying the learning from the pandemic to increase capability to respond to future threats, including developing a pathogen agnostic pandemic preparedness plan. The timescales for testing will be dependent on whether the threat is a known or novel pathogen. The plan aims to develop effective testing and alignment with the 100 Day Mission to respond to future pandemic threats. During the pandemic, a testing service for the UKHSA and sentinel National Health Service laboratories was established in approximately six weeks and surge testing was established in a further six weeks.

Rachael Maskell: [\[99897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the capability of the (a) science and research base and (b) manufacturing sector to respond to future pandemics.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: The Government will continually work with science, research and industry sectors to understand capacity and capability needs for pandemic preparedness and wider health threats.

The UK Health and Security Agency will build upon the experiences, globally, from the last decade of public health protection, including our experiences in tackling COVID-19.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell: [\[99901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has taken recent steps to ensure that his Department's public communications are targeted to increase engagement with the flu vaccine programme.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government has launched a communications campaign to encourage eligible members of the public receive a flu vaccination. This includes targeted efforts among communities with lower uptake.

On 3 December NHS England issued a reminder to parents to book vaccine appointments for eligible children. This is in addition to advice from the UK Health Security Agency to book appointments before Christmas. Campaign ambassadors will engage with multicultural communities in places of worship and other settings to address vaccine hesitancy. This is in addition to radio and social media advertising.

■ IVF: HIV Infection

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[99764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to remove legal restrictions on allowing people with HIV top access fertility treatment.

Maria Caulfield:

The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs has established a working group to review the current guidelines on gamete donation. This includes consideration of the position on gamete donors with HIV. The Department will consider any advice which may result from this review.

■ Long Covid

Zarah Sultana:

[\[100009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help (a) develop treatments for and (b) reduce the level of incidence of Long Covid; and what recent assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of disability benefit (i) provision and (ii) eligibility for people with Long Covid.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 5 December 2022]: The Government has invested more than £50 million in 22 research projects for Post COVID-19 Syndrome to improve understanding and treatment of the condition. We are also monitoring research being undertaken internationally. The National Institute for Health and Care Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including Post COVID-19 Syndrome.

The reduction of transmission will reduce the prevalence of Post COVID-19 Syndrome, through pharmaceutical interventions such as vaccines and identifying and isolating positive cases and providing advice to the public on how to protect themselves and others. No specific assessment has been made of the adequacy of disability benefit provision and eligibility for those experiencing the long term effects of COVID-19 infection.

■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

Catherine West:

[\[99933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer given on 2 March 2022 to Question 125430, on Mental Health Services: Children, what progress his Department has made with NHS England and stakeholders in improving waiting times for, and access to, child and adolescent mental health services.

Maria Caulfield:

We are progressing work with NHS England and stakeholders to increase access to children and young people's mental health services as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan. As set out in Our Plan for Patients, we remain committed to increasing

access to these services, and ensuring easier access to general practice through the Plan for Patients will also support delivery of this ambition.

The NHS Long Term Plan commits to increasing investment in mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 so that an additional 345,000 children and young people are able to get the NHS-funded mental health support they need. And in 2021/22 we provided an additional £79 million in response to the pandemic to expand children's mental health services in the 2021/22 financial year. We are making good progress. Over 689,000 children and young people under 18 were supported through NHS-funded mental health community services with at least one contact in the twelve months to July 2022, compared to 615,000 for the same period to July 2021.

NHS England has consulted on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards as part of its clinically - led review of NHS access standards . One of these is that children, young people and their families/carers presenting to community-based mental health services, should start to receive care within four weeks from referral. We are now working with NHS England on the next steps.

■ **Mental Health Services: Private Sector**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[95892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much was spent on private providers for NHS inpatient mental health treatment in the last 12 months.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 30 November 2022]: NHS England has advised that this information is not currently held centrally.

■ **Mental Health Services: Shropshire**

Mark Pritchard: [\[98744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for community mental health services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Maria Caulfield:

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to expand mental health services in England, including in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

■ **NHS: Correspondence**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[98866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost of NHS appointment letters being written, posted and sent out in England is each year.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Palliative Care

Sir George Howarth: [\[97471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of Marie Curie's Better End of Life report, published in November 2022; and what plans he has to improve access to out-of-hours care for people with a terminal illness and their carers who are struggling to access essential care at home.

Sir George Howarth: [\[97472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will respond to the findings of Marie Curie's Better End of Life report published in November 2022 entitled Mind the gaps: understanding and improving out-of-hours care for people with advanced illness and their informal carers; and what assessment his Department has made of the impact of access to 24/7 palliative care telephone advice lines for people with a terminal illness and their carers.

Helen Whately:

Local commissioners are responsible for ensuring access to palliative and end of life care. NHS England has published statutory guidance to support commissioners with implementation of the Health and Care Act 2022, including how services should meet population needs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

■ Palliative Care: Children

Dame Caroline Dinenge: [\[98723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plans are for the (a) arrangement and (b) independence of a review into disputes relating to treatment of critically ill children as set out in the Health and Care Act 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department has commissioned the Nuffield Council on Bioethics to undertake a review into disputes relating to treatment of critically ill children, which will commence on 12 December 2022. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics is an independent charitable body which will be responsible for the design, project management, activities and methods used in the review and its recommendations.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Children

Rachael Maskell: [\[99898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help reduce the level of respiratory syncytial virus infections in (a) children and (b) babies.

Rachael Maskell: [\[99900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help reduce the level of respiratory syncytial virus infections.

Maria Caulfield:

The UK Health Security Agency publishes weekly surveillance reports on the levels of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) in England and on bronchiolitis as a condition associated with RSV in young children. This surveillance has led to the activation of the National Health Service monoclonal antibody prevention programme for infants at highest risk from RSV infection. We have also highlighted the signs and symptoms of RSV and the steps which can be taken to reduce infections, including reducing risks to babies, through social media, online content and national and regional media.

■ **Social Services: Finance**

Rachael Maskell: [\[99909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the level of funding for adult social care.

Helen Whately:

The Government is providing up to £7.5 billion over two years to support adult social care and discharge with up to £2.8 billion available in 2023/24 and £4.7 billion in 2024/25.

■ **Vaccination**

Jim Shannon: [\[94752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has set targets for the uptake of all recommended adult vaccines in winter 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

While there is no formal target for the COVID-19 autumn booster programme, it aims to increase immunity in those at higher risk of severe COVID-19 during the winter. The flu vaccination programme for 2022/23 aims to demonstrate a 100% offer and achieve at least the uptake levels of 2021/22 for each cohort and exceed them.

The two national immunisation programmes for adults to protect against shingles and pneumococcal infections have a target of 60% coverage. These programmes are not seasonal and vaccines are offered throughout the year as individuals become eligible or on visiting a general practitioner.

HOME OFFICE■ **Asylum: Richmond**

Mr David Davis: [\[98656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any sites have been identified in Richmond (Yorks) constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[98657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any sites have been identified in Tonbridge and Malling constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[98658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any sites have been identified in Wyre and Preston North constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[98659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any sites have been identified in Stratford-on-Avon constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

Successive years of record numbers crossing the channel has placed our immigration system under substantial pressure. To meet our statutory obligation, we ask our accommodation providers to source accommodation in all areas.

When a site becomes available and meets the requirements of our accommodation standards, we follow our engagement process and notify the local MP as well as local authority officials in advance of using the location.

■ **Asylum: Saffron Walden**

Mr David Davis:

[\[96557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has identified any sites in Saffron Walden constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[96558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has identified any sites in North East Cambridgeshire constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[96559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has identified any sites in Fareham constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[96560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has identified any sites in Braintree constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Mr David Davis:

[\[96561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has identified any sites in Suffolk Coastal constituency for the temporary housing of asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

Successive years of record numbers crossing the channel has placed our immigration system under substantial pressure. To meet our statutory obligation, we ask our accommodation providers to source accommodation in all areas.

When a site becomes available and meets the requirements of our accommodation standards, we follow our engagement process and notify the local MP as well as local authority officials in advance of using the location.

■ **Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[98863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to expedite the delivery of asylum seekers data on (a) age, (b) language and (c) wider demographic information to local authorities providing (i) initial and (ii) contingency accommodation for those people.

Robert Jenrick:

We are in close contact with local authorities and share data, where it is appropriate to do so, in line with data protection principles.

Data, including demographics of those within hotels, is shared via the Data Sharing Portal. This assists local support services work with our users in provision of health and education needs.

Multi Agency Forum meetings are held regularly to discuss the operational arrangements of sites with Local Authority Officials and statutory partners, which also allows exchange data of this nature.

■ **Children: Detainees**

Janet Daby:

[\[101057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's statistics Police Powers and Procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of the number of children detained in police custody for non-notifiable offences.

Janet Daby:

[\[101058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will collect data from police forces in England and Wales on the period of time between a child being detained in police custody and an Appropriate Adult first being in attendance.

Chris Philp:

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

All data collections are reviewed each year by the Policing Data Requirement Group (PDRG) to ensure that the amount of data requested from the police is proportionate and that forces have the technical capabilities to provide the data requested. We will be considering the feasibility of collecting data on the period of time between a child being detained in police custody, an Appropriate Adult first being in attendance and the average time taken for an AA to arrive.

Police custody is a core element of the criminal justice system and is critical for keeping the public safe. Children should only be detained in custody as a last resort and any opportunities to divert children away from custody should be taken. The data published on 17 November suggests that children were more likely to be detained in custody for robbery offences, possession of weapons offences and theft offences and less likely to be in custody for non-notifiable offences. It is positive to see that the number of children in police custody has decreased significantly, by 84%, over the last 10 years.

We hold regular discussions with policing and wider stakeholders on the availability of Appropriate Adults and custody policy in general. The data published on 17 November shows that, for the forces who provided data to us, an Appropriate Adult was called for 99% of children in custody. We expect forces to act in accordance with the statutory safeguards for children in custody, including the provision of appropriate adults. Procedures in custody are subject to independent scrutiny and oversight by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. We expect forces to take recommendations from HMICFRS seriously and act in response to them.

■ Detention Centres**Layla Moran:**[\[101779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many detainees died while detained at each immigration removal centre annually from 2015 to 2022.

Layla Moran:[\[101780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make a comparative assessment of the relationship between increased bed spaces in an immigration removal centre and prevalence of code red incidents.

Layla Moran: [\[101781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department made of the potential for expanding alternatives to detention, including increasing local immigration casework capacities, prior to planning for the reopening of Campsfield House.

Layla Moran: [\[101782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many bed spaces were available at each immigration removal centre in each year since 2015.

Layla Moran: [\[101783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will publish data on the distance individuals are moved across the UK from their place of residence in the community to an immigration removal centre.

Robert Jenrick:

The first Community Engagement Pilot, Action Access, provided women who would otherwise be detained with a programme of support in the community. This pilot concluded on 31 March 2021. The independent evaluation of Action Access was published on 24 January 2022.

The second pilot, the Refugee and Migrant Advisory Service, supported both men and women in the community and remained in operation for two years until June 2022. The independent evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advisory Service is expected early in the new year. We will use the UNHCR evaluations of these pilots to inform our future approach to case-management focused alternatives to detention.

Since 2018, information on deaths in immigration detention has been included in published immigration statistics on an annual basis. Data on the number of deaths of people detained under immigration powers in each year from 2017, are published in section 8 'detention and returns', table Det_05b and b of the detention summary tables, found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1098047/detention-summary-jun-2022-tables.ods

Critical incidents in the immigration removal estate are managed, where appropriate, through a command structure. The published guidance Detention Services Order 05/2015 'Reporting and Communicating Incidents in the Immigration Removal Estate' defines the category of incidents (red, amber, green) and provides instruction and guidance for staff on reporting and communicating incidents. Red (critical) incidents relate to the management of an event outside of usual centre business that has, or potentially will have a serious impact on the operation of a facility or the safety and security of staff, detained people or the wider public.

The table below sets out the operational capacity for each immigration removal centre (if all rooms and beds are in use) from 2015 to date.

IRC	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Brook House	448	448	448	448	448	448	448	450
Colnbrook	396	391	391	339	339	330	330	330
Dungavel House	249	249	249	249	249	125	125	121
Harmondsworth	665	676	676	702	726	635	635	635
Morton Hall	392	392	392	392	391	391	352	-
Tinsley House	153	153	153	168	168	168	162	162
Yarl's Wood	410	410	410	410	410	410	410	410
Derwentside	-	-	-	-	-	-	84	84
Total	2713	2719	2719	2708	2731	2507	2546	2192

The information sought on the distance individuals are moved across the UK from their place of residence in the community to an immigration removal centre is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Economic Crime

Dan Carden:

[\[101776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to increase funding for organisations tackling economic crime including (a) fraud, (b) money laundering and (c) corruption.

Tom Tugendhat:

The total SR21 settlement and the Economic Crime Levy represent an overall package of circa £400 million to tackle economic crime over the next three years, including support for the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) and law enforcement.

This investment allows us to continue our delivery of tackling Economic Crime, for example through the Suspicious Activity Reporting Reform programme. For fraud, we are investing in the law enforcement response, working with industry to remove the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit online, and replacing the current Action Fraud system with a new Fraud and Cyber Reporting and Analysis Service. Funding decisions from 2023-24 onwards remain subject to Departmental and HMT Economic Crime (Anti-Money Laundering) Levy allocations.

■ Gender Based Violence

David Linden:

[\[99947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government took to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls on 25 November.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a government priority. VAWG is unacceptable and preventable.

To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Home Secretary visited Refuge – a charity providing specialist services to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. The Home Secretary saw, first-hand, the National Domestic Violence Helpline the Home Office funds, which offers support and advice to victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

I visited Project Foundation at the Hampshire Fire and Police Headquarters to learn more about the methods they are using to disrupt and address abusive behaviour, whilst also protecting victims and survivors from further harm.

In the week leading up to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we launched the VAWG Support and Specialist Services competition for ‘by and for’ services to ensure support is in place for victims and survivors which best serves their needs. This will award up to £8.4 million over two years.

The ‘Enough’ campaign is our national communications campaign to challenge the harmful behaviours that exist within wider society, educate young people about healthy relationships and consent, and ensure victims can recognise abuse and receive support. To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it collaborated with influencers and commercial partners to share pledges in support of the day via social media and public relations activity.

In relation to tackling violence against women and girls internationally, the Foreign Secretary hosted a conference on ‘sexual violence in conflict’. Over 1,000 delegates from over 57 countries came together to reaffirm their commitment to preventing sexual violence in conflict. At the conference, the UK launched a new three-year Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Strategy, announcing further funding of up to £12.5 million to deliver its objectives.

■ Home Office: Accountancy

John Cryer:

[\[99718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all contracts, consultancies or other services placed with the accountancy firms (i) Deloitte & Touche, (ii) Ernst & Young, (iii) KPMG and (iv) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by her Department.

Chris Philp:

Details of Government contracts from 2016 above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder.

■ **Housing: Asylum****Rachael Maskell:****[98873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the total amount of housing required by (a) refugees and (b) asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets Data are published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 24 November 2022. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in February 2023.

Once an asylum seeker has received refugee status, they are eligible to work, receive mainstream benefits and accommodation which should be provided by the local authority.

Rachael Maskell:**[98875]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has set a time limit for the amount of time a (a) single, (b) family and (c) children asylum seeker or refugee should spend in a hotel prior to be allocated more permanent housing; and what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to identify other adequate forms of temporary accommodation for those groups.

Robert Jenrick:

Although there is no limit on the length of time adults, families and children supported under section 95 of the 1999 Act can remain in hotel accommodation we do not want to house people in temporary accommodation for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

The use of hotel accommodation is a temporary solution to meet our immediate statutory need. The plans in place for exiting hotels depend upon our providers being able to secure sufficient bedspaces in dispersal accommodation across the country. We have been working closely with our accommodation providers to urgently increase the amount of Dispersed Accommodation (DA) available to us. The full asylum dispersal model, announced on 13 April 2022, will gradually end the use of hotels. This will be achieved by allowing the Home Office to procure dispersal properties within the private rental sector in all Local Authority areas across England, Scotland and Wales, rather than the minority of Local Authorities which currently participate.

■ Internet: Vulnerable Adults**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[100895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the impact of online (a) scams and (b) fraud on vulnerable adults in the last 12 months.

Tom Tugendhat:

The scale of online fraud is alarming, and we are deeply concerned by the devastating impact it can have on victims both financially and emotionally. We are committed to tackling fraud and holding those who profit from it to account. We will be publishing our new fraud strategy early in 2023.

The Home Office does not collate statistics regarding costs to victims of online fraud. The most recent estimate of the total cost of fraud against individuals in England and Wales was estimated at £4.7 billion for 2016. As of March 2022, online fraud was estimated at 61% of fraud (CSEW). This data can be found in table 4 here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/natureofcrimefraudandcomputermisuse>.

■ Members: Correspondence**David Linden:** [\[101771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will respond to the correspondence sent of 21 September and 24 October 2022 from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11420.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 5 December 2022.

■ Passports: North East Hampshire**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** [\[98801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passport applications (a) have been and (b) are yet to be processed from people in North East Hampshire constituency in the last 12 months.

Robert Jenrick:

His Majesty's Passport Office is unable to provide data relating to volumes of applications received from any particular constituency as this data cannot be extracted into a reportable format.

■ Police: Recruitment**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[98748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many additional counter terrorism police officers have been recruited since 2010.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales statistical bulletin. [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2022)

Information on the number of police officers, police staff and Police Community Support Officers by function is published annually in tables F1, F2 and F3 accompanying the police workforce statistics. The latest data, covering the situation as at 31 March 2022, are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2022>

The data in these tables include the number of police officers and staff working under function 9 – National Policing.

Function 9 - "National Policing" - includes officers, staff, and PCSOs working primarily in the following subfunctions:

- Counter Terrorism/Special Branch
- NPCC Projects / Initiatives
- Hosting National Services
- Other National Policing Requirements

Table F4 provides further details on the types of roles covered by these functions. For reasons of national security, we do not separately publish the number of officers in each of these roles.

■ Radicalism**Ruth Jones:****[98781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to help tackle far-right extremism.

Tom Tugendhat:

The overarching aim of the UK's comprehensive counter terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that our people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

CONTEST is threat agnostic, and government's powers and capabilities are both applicable and effective in tackling various ideologies, including Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism (ERWT).

Since March 2017, the police have disrupted twelve ERWT plots, and the government has now proscribed 5 ERWT groups as well as groups aliases. In 2021 we reviewed our approach to ERWT which confirmed our threat agnostic approach was proportionate and effective in dealing with the various threats we face.

Most recently government has;

- Established the world-leading Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre to pull together expertise and resource across police, intelligence agencies and the criminal justice system. This will enable us to better identify and tackle emerging threats from terrorism, hostile state activity and serious organised crime.
- Announced the Protect Duty (to be introduced by primary legislation) which will assist in reducing potential vulnerabilities and strengthening our protection against terrorist attacks by seeking the consideration and implementation of appropriate and proportionate security measures at certain locations.
- Introduced the Online Safety Bill to Parliament - a truly world-leading and much-needed law which will make the UK the safest place to be online –which will require tech companies to remove and limit the spread of terrorist content. The Bill will be continuing its passage through Parliament shortly.

Announced the refresh of the CONTEST strategy, which is being updated to protect the public from new and emerging threats to our way of life.

■ Radicalism: Social Media

David Linden:

[\[99954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the research paper entitled Super- (and hyper-) posters on extremist forums, published in the Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism on 30 July 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of that paper's findings; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government draws on a broad range of analysis and evidence to understand the scale and nature of the online terrorism threat and inform our approach to tackling terrorist and extremist exploitation of the internet.

The authors of the report have presented their research to Home Office officials. The findings will help us further increase our understanding of the role of extremist networks in creating permissive and radicalising online environments. Tackling terrorist ideologies and radicalising influences is a core component of HMG's Prevent strategy.

We are committed to working with domestic and international partners, civil society organisations, tech companies, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and others to review the operation of algorithms and other online features that may drive users towards terrorist and violent extremist content.

We do not believe a Written Ministerial or Oral statement is necessary at this time.

■ Wind Power: Labour Market

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[98938\]](#)

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 estimate she

has made of the size of the shortfall of resident labour in the latest period for which data is available.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is not responsible for evaluating the labour market and therefore has made no such estimate. The Home Office is clear that all employers should first seek to recruit from the resident labour market before using immigration to provide a work force.

■ **Youth Mobility Scheme**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[98901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement published 15 June 2021, when she plans to introduce the increase in age criteria for the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK and Australia signed a side letter on mobility in December 2021 alongside the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, setting out commitments on their respective Youth Mobility Scheme and Working Holiday Maker programmes.

The UK and Australia will make changes to these schemes so that they are available to people aged 18 to 35 years for a total stay of up to 3 years. Australia will also remove the requirement for UK nationals on their programme to undertake specific types of work.

Both sides agreed to implement these changes within two years of entry into force of the Free Trade Agreement and will jointly decide on a date for these commitments to come into effect.

JUSTICE

■ **Arrest Warrants: Unpaid Fines**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[101690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November to Question 94678, if he will make it his policy to prevent courts in England issuing arrest warrants for non-payment of fines for television licence fee offences.

Mike Freer:

This Government is committed to ensuring the payment of financial penalties and it is right that the courts have a full range of enforcement powers. However, courts will typically use other methods of recovery to arrest warrants unless they are deemed inappropriate. There is currently no intention to change this approach.

■ Ministry of Justice: Grievance Procedures

Steve Reed:

[\[98789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff in his Department have raised a grievance in each year since 2018.

Mike Freer:

Number of staff raising grievances in MoJ for financial years 2017/18 to 2021/22:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NUMBER OF GRIEVANCES RAISED	GRIEVANCES RAISED AS PERCENTAGE OF HEADCOUNT
2017/18	1,055	1.54%
2018/19	928	1.26%
2019/20	1,013	1.34%
2020/21	839	1.08%
2021/22	1,078	1.26%

Notes and caveats:

1. Data covers employees in Ministry of Justice Head Quarters, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, Legal Aid Agency, Office of the Public Guardian and Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.
1. Please note numbers above are number of staff raising grievances regardless of eventual outcome. Not all grievances were upheld.
1. Staff raising grievances through official processes are counted.
1. Where staff raise more than one grievance in a year they are counted only once.
1. A case is defined as a grievance raised by an individual member of staff, it may consist of more than one reason.
1. As with all HR databases, extracts are taken at a fixed point in time, to ensure consistency of reporting. However, the database itself is dynamic, and where updates to the database are made late, subsequent to the taking of the extract, these updates will not be reflected in figures produced by the extract. For this reason, HR data are unlikely to be precisely accurate.
1. There may be minor changes to figures in future due to additional data being recorded on the case management systems.
1. Data is based on the financial year the grievance was opened on the case management system. Financial year has been used to align the reporting period to the HMPPS Staff Equalities Report. Data provided in PQs 94764, 94765, 94766 and 94769 were based on calendar rather than year.

Steve Reed:[\[98792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of mediations undertaken as part of his Department's grievance process in each of the last five years.

Mike Freer:

The table below shows the number of mediations undertaken as part of the Department's grievance process in each of the last five years:

CALENDAR YEARS	NUMBER OF MEDIATIONS	TOTAL % OF HEADCOUNT
2018	12	0.02%
2019	81	0.10%
2020	54	0.08%
2021	49	0.05%
2022	73	0.08%

Notes and caveats:

(1) Data represents the combined number of mediations for Ministry of Justice Head Quarters which includes the following Agencies and Arm's Length Public Bodies (ALBs):

- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)
- Her Majesty's Court and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)
- Legal Aid Agency (LAA)
- Office of the Public Guardian (OPG)
- CAFCASS
- Criminal Cases Review Commission
- Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC)
- Legal Services Board
- Parole Board (PB)
- Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB)
- Advisory Committees on Justices of the Peace
- Civil Justice Council
- Civil Procedure Rule Committee
- Criminal Procedure Rule Committee

- Family Justice Council
- Family Procedure Rule Committee
- Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody
- Insolvency Rules Committee
- Law Commission
- Prison Service Pay Review Body
- Sentencing Council for England and Wales
- Tribunal Procedure Committee
- Academy for Social Justice
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- HM Inspectorate of Probation
- Independent Monitoring Boards
- Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman
- Judicial Office
- The Legal Ombudsman
- Official Solicitor and Public Trustee
- Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
- Victims' Commissioner

(2) Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process that allows colleagues to resolve conflict with the help of neutral mediators.

(3) Mediation can be used as an alternative to the formal grievance process or might be part of an action plan following formal action.

■ **Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave**

Steve Reed:

[\[101739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2022 to Question 87949 on Prison and Probation Service: Sick Leave, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of working days lost as a result of work-related stress in 2022.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Prisoners and Young Offenders

Steve Reed: [\[98791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the total number of (a) male prisoners, (b) female prisoners and (c) young offenders in each of the next five years.

Damian Hinds:

We do not project breakdowns of the adult male, women's and youth prison population beyond 2025.

Our latest prison population projections, published November 2021, are provided on Table A3 here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035708/Prison_Projections_2021-2026_Tables.ods.

■ Prisoners' Release: Christmas

Steve Reed: [\[101736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the number of offenders who will be granted (a) early release, (b) temporary license and (c) home detention curfew by each offence committed by those offenders at Christmas in 2022.

Steve Reed: [\[101737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of offenders granted (a) early release, (b) temporary license and (c) home detention curfew over Christmas in each year since 2020.

Damian Hinds:

Prisoners are not released early or on home detention curfew (HDC) to allow them to go home for Christmas. Prisoners who are eligible for HDC and meet all relevant criteria will be released on or after they reach the eligibility date, whenever it falls.

The number of people released on HDC in the week including Christmas Day in 2020 was 166, and in 2021 it was 202.

Where a prisoner is serving a sentence of 5 days' imprisonment or more and their automatic release date falls on a weekend or bank holiday the law requires their release on the preceding working day so that there are appropriate services and support available when they are released. In 2020, 116 prisoners whose automatic release date fell on 25 or 26 December were released on Thursday 24 December as a result of this provision. In 2021, 145 prisoners whose automatic release date fell on 25 or 26 December were released on Friday 24 December.

On 25 December 2020, the recorded data indicates there were 14 individuals recorded as temporarily released from prison. On 25 December 2021 the figure was 1,377.

It is not possible to robustly estimate the number of prisoners that will receive ROTL, HDC and early release over Christmas 2022, by offence, within the disproportionate cost threshold.

■ Prisoners' Release: Maladministration and Prisoner Escapes

Steve Reed:

[\[101738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of inmates who have been (a) released in error and (b) escaped prison in the month of December in each year since 2018.

Damian Hinds:

A prisoner escapes if they breach the secure perimeter of a closed prison. While incidents are extremely rare, prisoners face prosecution and more time behind bars when recaptured. The vast majority of escapees are promptly recaptured by police within hours.

A prisoner is released in error if released earlier than their correct release date. They will be unlawfully at large until they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody.

Data on escapes and releases in error for the month of December in each year since 2018 is as follows:

MONTH	RELEASES IN ERROR	ESCAPES
Dec-18	3	0
Dec-19	2	2
Dec-20	2	0
Dec-21	3	1

Data sources and quality

These figures have been drawn from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System. Care is taken when processing and analysing returns but the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although shown to the last case, the figures may not be accurate to that level.

(1) A prisoner is released in error if they are released earlier than their correct release date they will be unlawfully at large until and unless they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody.

(2) A prisoner escapes when they are able to pass beyond the perimeter of a secure prison or the control of escorting staff. This may involve overcoming physical security restraints such as a wall or fence; locks, bolts or bars; a secure vehicle; handcuffs; or the direct supervision of escorting staff.

(3) Includes both escapes from establishments (by breaching the secure perimeter of prison grounds) and escort areas (either the control of escorting prison staff or the secure vehicles or supervision of contracted prison escorts).

Figures for the number of escapes and releases in error from prison custody are published in the Annual Digest in July each year, the latest published year being 2021-22. Figures from April 2022 onwards are exempt for future publication.

■ Prisons: Christmas

Steve Reed:

[\[101734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate has he made of the cost to the public purse on Christmas decorations in (a) Category A, (b) Category B and (c) all other prisons in each of the last three years.

Steve Reed:

[\[101735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of Christmas decorations in (a) all, (b) Category A and (c) Category B prisons in 2022.

Damian Hinds:

Information on the cost of Christmas decorations across the public prison estate is not collected centrally and this data could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ British National (Overseas): Housing

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[98854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives of (a) Crawley Borough Council and (b) West Sussex County Council on making an assessment of the housing needs of people of Chagossian descent who became eligible for British nationality on 23 November 2022.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[98856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his policy is on whether local authorities are expected to provide housing for individuals of Chagossian descent, who became eligible for British nationality on 23 November 2022, upon the arrival of such individuals in the UK.

Felicity Buchan:

As has been the case under successive administrations, details of external ministerial meetings are published regularly on gov.uk. Officials are in regular contact with counterparts in local government on a variety of issues.

Further to the gov.uk [page](#) administered by the Home Office and FCDO, information on eligibility for homelessness assistance is set out in the [Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities](#).

■ Community Assets

Beth Winter: [\[98897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the rate of success of applications for funding from (a) the Dormant Asset Fund, (b) the Community Ownership Fund and (c) other sources for the development of community assets and services in coalfield communities.

Dehenna Davison:

The government is committed to levelling up the UK by spreading opportunity more equally across the country, investing in places that need it most, including coalfield communities. Multiple former coalfield communities are benefiting from the Community Ownership Fund including the CANA resource and training centre in Rhondda Cynon Taf which received funding in round one. Dormant assets funding has no central bidding process for accessing it. In Wales, £39.2 million of dormant assets funding has supported a variety of projects, including investing £16.3 million in young people, learning, education and employment, whilst £4.7 million has been spent on climate change action.

In addition to this, former coalfield communities are also benefitting from the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, from the Towns Fund, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and our Freeports programme.

■ Leasehold

Seema Malhotra: [\[98793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on existing leaseholders.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [75940](#), on 9 November 2022.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Food: Northern Ireland

Anneliese Dodds: [\[101051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps, with Cabinet colleagues, to help increase the availability of foods that meet religious needs, including Kosher food, in Northern Ireland.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[101052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will make an assessment of the (a) cost and (b) availability of foods that meet religious needs, including Kosher food, in Northern Ireland.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[101053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether his Department (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with the Government Equalities Office on the provision of foods that meet religious needs, including Kosher food, in Northern Ireland.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: The implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol is currently presenting very significant challenges for people and businesses in Northern Ireland. These include trade disruption and diversion, significant costs and bureaucracy for traders and areas where people in Northern Ireland have not been able to benefit fully from the same advantages as those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Northern Ireland Protocol has impacted on the supply of Kosher and other products for religious observance to Northern Ireland, as traditional suppliers in Great Britain have not been willing to engage with the bureaucratic processes required under the Northern Ireland Protocol.

It's our preference to resolve the issues with the Northern Ireland Protocol through talks and the Government is engaging in constructive dialogue with the EU to find solutions to these problems. However, we are proceeding with legislation, which aims to fix the practical problems the Northern Ireland Protocol has created.

One of the key things this proposed legislation would do is to create a "green channel" for goods moving and staying within the UK - so the movement of kosher and other religious products would not be subject to the complex rules with which suppliers are currently having to deal.

In the meantime, UK Government Ministers have engaged extensively with the Jewish community in Northern Ireland to understand the challenges they face and officials have been working closely with the community to enable them to access the products they require.

TRANSPORT

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

Gavin Newlands:

[\[99878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the total amount of funding allocated to local transport authorities under the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme where the procurement process has not yet been completed.

Mr Richard Holden:

We have committed to funding 4,000 zero emission buses (ZEBs) this Parliament. Since February 2020 we have provided funding support for nearly 2,400 zero emission buses in England. Across the UK an estimated 3,250 ZEBs have been funded so far.

As part of the Government's commitment to ZEBs, the Government awarded £270 million through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (Scheme) to 17 local transport authorities which will support up to 1,278 zero emission buses.

Table 1 below presents information on whether zero emission buses have been ordered from funding from the ZEBRA scheme. The numbers in Table 1 are not official statistics: they are based on the latest publicly available information and are therefore subject to change.

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING	NO. BUSES	STATUS	BUS MANUFACTURER
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority	£4,200,000	30	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Kent County Council	£9,500,000	33	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Leicester City Council	£19,000,000	96	6 buses on the road 90 buses ordered	6 buses on the road supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong 90 buses ordered from Wrightbus
Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC)	£16,600,000	56	Funded – on hold	Following the operator's withdrawal of support, the Department is working closely with MKCC to determine next steps.
Warrington Borough Council	£21,400,000	120	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING	NO. BUSES	STATUS	BUS MANUFACTURER
South Yorkshire Combined Authority	£8,400,000	27	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Norfolk County Council	£3,300,000	15	Ordered	Wrightbus
North Yorkshire County Council	£7,800,000	39	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Portsmouth City Council & Hampshire County Council	£6,600,000	34	Ordered	Wrightbus
Blackpool Council	£19,600,000	115	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Nottingham City Council	£15,200,000	78	12 ordered. 66 funded.	12 buses supplied by Pelican & Coach UK and manufactured by Yutong. Bus manufacturer for 66 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£35,700,000	170	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Hertfordshire County Council	£5,600,000	27	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by

LOCAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	FUNDING	NO. BUSES	STATUS	BUS MANUFACTURER
				local transport authority or bus operator.
West Midlands Combined Authority	£30,400,000	124	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
City of York Council	£8,400,000	44	Ordered	Wrightbus
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	£24,600,000	111	32 buses ordered 79 buses funded.	32 buses ordered from Wrightbus Bus manufacturer for 79 buses subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.
Oxfordshire County Council	£32,800,000	159	Funded	Bus manufacturer subject to outcome of procurement process by local transport authority or bus operator.

■ **Civil Aviation (Denied Boarding, Compensation and Assistance) Regulations 2005**

Stella Creasy:

[\[101724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether plans he plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Civil Aviation (Denied Boarding, Compensation and Assistance) Regulations 2005.

Jesse Norman:

The Department is currently in the process of reviewing its stock of Retained EU Law. This workstream will be dynamic as we carefully consider all the options and opportunities available.

■ **Diesel and Vegetable Oils: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Jessica Morden:

[\[99776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the annual average greenhouse gas emissions from (a) hydrogenated vegetable oil and (b) diesel.

Jesse Norman:

Hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), like other renewable fuels, is eligible for support under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). The RTFO is a certificate trading scheme that requires large suppliers of transport fuel to ensure a percentage of the total fuel they supply is from renewable sources. The RTFO further incentivises HVO produced from waste feedstocks, such as tallow or used cooking oil, by awarding double the renewable transport fuel certificates (RTFCs) compared to crop derived fuels.

Like all low carbon fuels supported under the RTFO, the Department regularly reports on the carbon savings achieved from HVO. In 2021, HVO provided an average 89% carbon reduction compared to a fossil fuel comparator. Full statistical reports are published quarterly on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/renewable-fuel-statistics>.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Zarah Sultana:****[101803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of private electric vehicle charging points that are accessible through peer-to-peer charging as of 2 December 2022; and if he will take steps to (a) incentivise and (b) increase the accessibility of peer-to-peer electric vehicle charging.

Jesse Norman:

The Government encourages innovative EV charging solutions, such as peer-to-peer schemes, that can help to increase the range of charging options available to drivers. However, the Department does not monitor the numbers of private chargepoints which are used for peer-to-peer charging.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Expenditure**Andrew Bridgen:****[99848]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how (a) much money and (b) many hours have been spent by (i) High Speed Two Limited and (ii) his Department on (A) the design and (B) consultation on the proposed HS2 line to Leeds from the East Midlands Hub since 21 November 2021.

Huw Merriman:

Preparatory work on the study envisaged in the IRP of how HS2 services could best reach Leeds has been undertaken using existing Department for Transport staff as part of their routine work. No consultation has been launched. We intend to publish the terms of reference for the Study soon.

HS2 Ltd has not undertaken, and no money and no hours have been spent on, any proactive work (design or consultation) on the section of high speed route to Leeds from the East Midlands Hub in the period in question.

■ Jet Skis

Catherine West: [\[99932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of local authority rules in tackling the negative effects of jet ski usage.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local and harbour authorities have wide-ranging powers to introduce measures to respond to the negative effects of personal watercraft usage. They are best placed to decide how to ensure safety for all users in the waters they manage given significant differences in local geography and usage. Guidance, including case studies looking at effective management strategies, is available.

The Department for Transport is supporting these authorities through the introduction of new national legislation to further strengthen enforcement measures.

■ Motorways: Safety

Sarah Champion: [\[100986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November to Question 93553 on Motorways: Safety, of the 10% of vehicles stopped in live lanes on all-lane running motorways not detected within 60 seconds, in how many instances detection took more than (a) five and (b) ten minutes in 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

National Highways has established processes for monitoring the performance of stopped vehicle detection where it is in place on all lane running sections of smart motorway, collecting samples of operational data covering emergency areas and live lanes. National Highways currently has 17 days' worth of operational sample data covering the period 2021 and 2022.

From this data, an average of around 98.3% of vehicles stopped in live lanes or emergency areas were detected within 5 minutes, and around 99.7% within 10 minutes. There were single figures of cars that took over 10 minutes to detect.

Please note that as the sample of the data evolves, there may be further changes to the figures presented. As the data is based on a sample dataset, any extrapolation or conclusions should be made with caution.

■ Network Rail and Train Operating Companies: Pay

Ian Mearns: [\[101708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Treasury is required to sign off a pay award for Network Rail employees.

Ian Mearns: [\[101709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Treasury is required to sign off a pay award for Train Operating Company employees.

Ian Mearns: [\[101710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether consent from HM Treasury is required before a pay offer can be made to employees of (a) Network Rail and (b) Train Operating Companies.

Ian Mearns: [\[101711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which his Department has the final sign off for a pay award for employees of (a) Network Rail and (b) Train Operating Companies.

Ian Mearns: [\[101712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor for the Exchequer on a pay award for employees of (a) Network Rail and (b) Train Operating Companies.

Huw Merriman:

Although HM Treasury sets Departmental budgets, both HM Treasury and the Department are required to sign off funding allocated to the train operating companies and Network Rail.

Network Rail and the Rail Delivery Group, on behalf of the train operating companies, are negotiating with trade unions on proposed pay offers.

■ Railways: Fares and Overcrowding

Tulip Siddiq: [\[101032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent steps she has taken to help prevent (a) high increases to passenger rail fares and (b) overcrowding on trains.

Huw Merriman:

In August we guaranteed we will not be increasing fares as much as the July RPI figure and we will freeze fares until March 2023. There are also several railcards available to passengers that offer discounts against most rail fares.

The Department is working closely with operators to ensure they provide rail timetables that meet new passenger travel patterns, are fit for the future, and carefully balance cost, capacity and performance.

■ Railways: Strikes

Charlotte Nichols: [\[98927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and (b) representatives of rail franchises on planned strike action.

Huw Merriman:

The Rail Minister has held a meeting with representatives from trade unions and employers to facilitate a conclusion to industrial action. The Secretary of State has recently held introductory meetings with rail unions, namely the RMT, TSSA and ASLEF, and will continue dialogue. We have made clear that it is for employers and

Trade Unions to negotiate the details of essential workforce reforms that would enable an affordable pay deal. Ministers' role is to facilitate and support the ongoing discussions between the rail industry and Trade Unions regarding workforce reform and pay. Ministers have also met with industry and owning groups to understand their viewpoints.

■ Railways: Suffolk

Tom Hunt: [\[101796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to restore a full two-track junction at Haughley Junction in Suffolk.

Huw Merriman:

Following the Autumn Statement on 17 November we are reviewing the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) for England and Wales, including the Haughley Junction scheme, and will publish an update to the RNEP in due course.

■ Roads: Air Pollution

Ruth Cadbury: [\[98834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to support British (a) inventors and (b) manufacturers with tackling roadside air pollution generated by motor vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

The Government aims to position the UK as the best place in the world to develop, manufacture and use zero exhaust emissions vehicles and ensure that the cleanest conventional vehicles are driven on our roads.

Innovation and a strong R&D ecosystem is key to this. Government is delivering:

- Innovate UK grants in emerging technologies which reduce non-exhaust emissions such as new tyre and brake designs.
- An investment of £1.5 billion through the Advanced Propulsion Centre and Faraday Battery Challenge to research, develop and commercialise low carbon and zero emission automotive technologies.
- The zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which will increase the UK's supply of ZEVs, create thousands of new jobs and put our industry at the forefront of this global transition by encouraging new investments in infrastructure.

■ Roads: Ely

Tom Hunt: [\[103034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to complete the proposed upgrades to Ely North junction under the Ely area capacity enhancement scheme.

Huw Merriman:

We are carefully reviewing the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline for England and Wales, following the Autumn Statement. We remain committed to publishing an update on RNEP and this will confirm the status of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement, including upgrades to Ely North Junction.

Vegetable Oils: Prices**Jessica Morden:**[\[99780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has (a) taken recent steps to help reduce and (b) had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the price of hydrogenated vegetable oil.

Jesse Norman:

The price of HVO is ultimately driven by market conditions and production costs, however, the operation of the RTFO is the Government's primary mechanism for addressing the cost difference between fossil fuels and renewable fuels such as HVO.

Ministers have not had any conversation with Cabinet colleagues recently regarding price of HVO specifically. But the Government recognises the important contribution that fuels such as HVO can play as it works to decarbonise transport.

TREASURY**Business: Government Assistance****Dan Carden:**[\[101778\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Ninth Report of Session 2021-22 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled Fraud and Error, HC 253, published on 30 June 2021, if he will take steps to implement the recommendation on introducing a presumption that the business beneficiaries of Government support schemes will be published.

Andrew Griffith:

In the Government Response to the Ninth Report of Session 2021-22 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled Fraud and Error, the Government did not agree with the Public Account Committee's recommendation to introduce a presumption that the business beneficiaries of Government support schemes should be published.

The Government has a duty to protect the personal data and privacy of the smallest businesses in the UK, therefore the Government must exercise discretion on transparency requirements in the case of some business beneficiaries. Details of facilities made available under the COVID-19 loan schemes have been published where required.

We have always been clear that fraud is unacceptable. The Government is taking action against those who have de-frauded the system by working closely with law

enforcement, counter-fraud agencies and commercial lenders. The lack of publication has no bearing on the ability of the National Auditing Office to audit support schemes.

■ Childcare: Tax Allowances

Mr Robin Walker: [\[98737\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the effectiveness of the tax-free childcare offer.

John Glen:

HM Treasury and the Department for Education work closely together on all childcare policy, including Tax-Free Childcare. Take-up of Tax-Free Childcare is on a steady upward trajectory: at the end of June 2022 (the most recent data) an estimated 391,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare for 468,000 children.

Mr Robin Walker: [\[98738\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data his Department holds on the take up of tax-free childcare in each of the last five years; and what steps he is taking to increase its take up.

Victoria Atkins:

The figures for open and used accounts for Tax-Free Childcare are published in Official Statistics. The latest release in November 2022 relates to figures up to September 2022 and are provided in the table below.

NUMBER OF:

(1000S)	FINANCIAL YEAR				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Children with 314 Open Accounts*	537	768	901	1,093	
Children with 72 Used Accounts*	203	396	462	647	
Families with 272 Open Accounts	449	615	697	816	
Families with 57 Used Accounts	160	315	374	512	

* This refers to the number of children for whom accounts are open/used. A used account is one where a payment has been made to a childcare provider within the

financial year. An open account is one where a family has met the eligibility criteria and may or may not have made a payment. This shows that in 2021-22 approximately 512,000 families used Tax-Free Childcare for 647,000 children

The Government is committed to supporting families with their childcare costs, including through Tax-Free Childcare (TFC). In July this year, we launched a £1.2 million communications campaign to help parents to access childcare support. This includes adverts through a variety of media channels, online, radio, television, newspaper and billboards. Additionally, we have worked with childcare providers at local levels to help parents better understand the support that is available to them.

■ Debts

Apsana Begum:

[\[98930\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the amount of international debt held by (a) private sector companies and (b) individuals registered in the UK.

Andrew Griffith:

The amount of sovereign debt held by private sector creditors differs significantly across countries. Over the last decade, the share of sovereign debt held by different types of private sector creditors has increased relative to official bilateral and multilateral creditors, particularly in low-income countries. For example, a recent World Bank publication noted that at end-2020, low-and middle-income countries owed five times as much to private sector creditors as they did to bilateral creditors. According to the IMF, for the 73 low-income countries eligible for the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, the share of external debt owed to the private sector increased from 10 percent of GDP in 2006 to 19 percent of GDP in 2020.

As most private debt takes the form of tradable instruments, the amount of international debt held by individuals registered in the UK can fluctuate on a regular basis. Figures from the Office for National Statistics estimate that UK investors owned around £12,663 billion of investment in international assets at the end of 2021.

■ Freezing of Assets: Russia

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[\[100901\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value is of Russian Federation state assets frozen in (a) the UK and (b) British Overseas Territories.

Mr Jonathan Djanogly:

[\[100902\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value is of the assets of sanctioned Russian nationals frozen in (a) the UK and (b) British Overseas Territories.

Andrew Griffith:

Relevant firms are legally obliged to report to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), part of HM Treasury, if they hold frozen assets of a designated person or entity they suspect to be on the list of asset freeze targets.

The aggregate figure of funds reported as frozen under the Russia regime (as at October 2022) in OFSI's Annual Review, published 10 November 2022 was approximately £18.39 billion. However, the Treasury does not break down the return data by category and/or institution in the manner requested.

The value of frozen funds in the UK can fluctuate for numerous reasons. These include changes to sanctions designations, changes in share or market values, or certain financial activity being licensed.

OFSI is not the competent authority for financial sanctions implementation in the Overseas Territories which are self-governing jurisdictions with their own democratically elected governments, and which are responsible for their own financial services policy. UK sanctions apply in all Overseas Territories. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office work closely with the Territories on implementation of sanctions. The Territories have publicly reported frozen Russian assets with a combined estimated value in excess of US\$9bn to date.

■ Inflation

Andrew Rosindell: [\[100906\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Bank of England on meeting the two per cent inflation target.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[100907\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of quantitative easing on the rate of inflation.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[100908\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to undertake a review of the autonomy of the Bank of England on monetary policy.

Andrew Griffith:

The Chancellor is fully committed to the independence of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in setting monetary policy, and has no plans to review this. At Autumn Statement on 17 November, the Chancellor re-affirmed the MPC's remit and primary target of achieving 2% CPI year on year, and stated that this government will not change the definition of price stability.

The Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England remain in close contact to ensure that monetary and fiscal policy are coordinated. The government also continually monitors economic developments, including inflation, to consider their impact on businesses and households. The government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

■ Pensions: Public Sector

Ben Lake:

[\[101769\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of restrictions on transfers from public sector pension schemes to defined contribution schemes.

John Glen:

The Government acknowledges that for unfunded Public Service Pension Schemes, outward transfers are limited under the Pensions Act 2015 to schemes where members cannot avail themselves of pension draw down flexibilities introduced by that Act. This is because draw down would increase the upfront cost of these unfunded schemes to taxpayers.

Where members move on from their public service employer, they can generally choose to become deferred members of their current pension scheme, which will see their rights in reformed 2015 Public Service Pension Schemes accrued up to this point fully price protected through continuing revaluations up to retirement.

■ Public Finance: Further Education

Emma Hardy:

[\[101045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he held discussions on the potential merits of allocating additional funding to further education colleges before the publication of the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.

John Glen:

At the Autumn Statement, the government set out a plan to support economic stability. The government is taking a responsible and disciplined approach to spending, while prioritising vital public services. Ahead of the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor considered a broad range of spending options across public services.

The government recognises the important role that further education colleges play in boosting skills and contributing to productivity. This is reflected in the Spending Review 2021 settlement, which announced an additional £3.8 billion for skills by 2024-25.

■ Safe Hands Plans: Insolvency

Alison McGovern:

[\[101719\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to help support those people affected by the collapse of the Safe Hand Funeral plan group.

Andrew Griffith:

In January 2021, the government legislated to bring all pre-paid funeral plan providers and intermediaries within the regulatory remit of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) from 29 July 2022. This has ensured that 1.6 million funeral plan customers are, for the first time, protected by compulsory and robust regulation as they seek to put their affairs in order.

Safe Hands Plans went into administration in March 2022. The government understands that this will be very concerning for customers of Safe Hands.

While the detailed investigation being carried out by the administrators is ongoing, the government continues to work closely with the FCA to monitor the implementation of regulation in this sector.

The government has been supportive of steps taken by the sector to provide assistance to Safe Hands customers. Dignity and Co-op – two of the largest providers in the country – have recently offered Safe Hands' customers new funeral plans at a substantially discounted price, which may be helpful to some affected planholders.

■ Taxpayer Protection Taskforce: Staff

Rachel Reeves:

[\[101713\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people worked for the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce in each month between April 2021 and December 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

At Spring Budget 2021 the Government announced a £100 million investment into the Taxpayer Protection Taskforce of 1,250 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff up to March 2023. The taskforce was established to extend HMRC's work to address fraud and error in the COVID support schemes that they administered (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and Eat Out to Help Out). The table below shows the month-by-month breakdown of resources deployed in the taskforce from April 2021 to end of October 2022. HMRC are unable to provide more recent data as this is still being assured.

Table 1: Monthly breakdown of FTE staff deployed to taskforce:

	APR PERIOD 2021	MAY 2021	JUN 2021	JUL 2021	AUG 2021	SEP 2021	OCT 2021	NOV 2021	DEC 2021	JAN 2022	FEB 2022	MAR 2022
Total FTE	908	1,018	1,216	1,291	1,228	1,256	1,180	1,184	1,145	1,101	1,096	1,142

PERIOD	APR 2022	MAY 2022	JUN 2022	JUL 2022	AUG 2022	SEP 2022	OCT 2022
Total FTE	1,180	1,155	1,246	1,203	1,230	1,232	1,187

■ Treasury: Accountancy

John Cryer:

[\[99714\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all contracts, consultancies or other services placed with the accountancy firms (i) Deloitte &

Touche, (ii) Ernst & Young, (iii) KPMG and (iv) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by her Department.

James Cartlidge:

The Government is committed to maintaining transparency about its procurement activity. Since 2010, HM Treasury has published information about its contracts with a value of over £10,000 on the “Contracts Finder” website.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cost of Living Payments and Universal Credit

Mary Glendon:

[\[101726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December to Question 96602 on Cost of Living Payments and Universal Credit, if he will take steps to collate the cost of living payment and Universal Credit payments so that claimants avoid benefit overlap which would require them to reapply for Universal Credit.

Guy Opperman:

I refer the Hon member to the response I gave to her last [PQ 96602](#), the cost of living payments have no impact on existing benefit awards, and so they do not cause claimants to have to reapply for Universal Credit.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Complaints

Jessica Morden:

[\[101705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints submitted to the DWP Independent Case Examiner are awaiting allocation to an Investigation Case Manager as of 2 December 2022; what the average wait time was for complaints to be allocated to an Independent Case Manager in the latest period for which data is available; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce Independent Case Examiner waiting times.

Mims Davies:

Post-Covid, ICE has seen an increased number of referrals accompanied by an increase in the number of cases it has accepted. In the year April 2021 to March 2022, there was a 17% increase in the number of complaints being referred to ICE and a 68% increase in the number of complaints being accepted for examination, compared to the previous reporting year.

Currently, there are 1249 cases awaiting allocation to an ICE investigator.

The rate at which complaints can be allocated to an investigator is dependent on multiple factors, including the volume and complexity of complaints received, as well as available investigative resource.

The average time taken, as at 5 December, from complaint receipt to allocation to an investigator (based on all current live cases being investigated) is 53 weeks (67 weeks for CMS cases, 50 weeks for DWP cases, 44 weeks for Provider cases).

The ICE office is continuously reviewing its own processes and operating model to improve productivity and is piloting a new way of allocating cases according to their nature and complexity as part of the initial complaint review.

The office has recruited 11 more investigators since April with a further 6 due to start in January 2023.

■ Employment: Disability

Jonathan Ashworth:

[101729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of the disability employment gap; and what steps he will take to reduce that gap.

Tom Pursglove:

Latest figures from the Labour Force Survey show the disability employment gap was 29.8 percentage points (ppts) in Q3 2022, an increase of 1.7ppts on the year and an overall decrease of 4.4ppts since the same quarter in 2013.

The trend in the disability employment gap was strong up to the pre-pandemic period, reflecting a healthy labour market in general and even greater progress in disability employment, which resulted in a consistent narrowing of the gap.

It is difficult to isolate the direct impact of policies on the disability employment gap as numerous elements are at play and interacting, including overall labour market trends and changes to the composition of the disabled population, in addition to the effects of disability employment policies and programmes in themselves. However, policy will have played an important role with positive employment outcomes reported across many programmes, such as [Employment Advisers in Improving Access to Psychological Therapies](#) and [the Work and Health Programme](#).

The trend in the disability employment gap since the pandemic had been largely flat, but the latest quarterly stats show a widening which we will continue to monitor closely, ensuring our policy efforts match our continued commitment to closing the DEG.

To close the disability employment gap, a range of Government initiatives are supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to start, stay and succeed in work. These include:

- Increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance;
- Support in partnership between DWP and the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services, which combines psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work;

- The Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- Access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace;
- The Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace.

Source: [A08: Labour market status of disabled people - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

Dan Carden: [\[101772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment he has made of employers complying with their obligation to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the (a) public and (b) private sectors.

Tom Pursglove:

The most recent assessment was set out in the Government's response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation. It identified a lack of awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities under the Equality Act among both employers and employees, in particular around providing reasonable adjustments. A separate assessment was not made for the public and private sectors. The measures the Government is taking forward provide greater clarity around employer and employee rights and responsibilities and address the need for employers to have access to clear and compelling information and advice that is easy to understand, trustworthy and accessible.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Inspections

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many offshore incidents met HSE's Incident Selection Criteria in the first six months of 2022.

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of offshore incidents (a) met HSE's Incident Selection Criteria and (b) were investigated by HSE in the first six months of 2022.

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many dangerous occurrences offshore were reported to HSE in the first six months of 2022.

Mims Davies:

In the first 6 months of 2022:

- 154 offshore incidents were reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), with 24 meeting HSE's Incident Selection Criteria.
- 118 dangerous occurrences at offshore sites were reported to HSE. 22 of the 118 dangerous occurrences met HSE's Incident Selection Criteria, of which 11 investigations were completed. 36 personal injury accidents were reported to HSE. Of these, 1 personal injury accident met HSE's Incident Selection Criteria and a resulting investigation was completed.
- An additional investigation regarding 1 fatality which met HSE's incident selection criteria is currently underway to determine whether this incident was work related, so is not reported in the 118 dangerous occurrences.

■ Health and Safety Executive: Staff

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the agreed capacity of the Wind and Marine Energy Team within HSE's Energy division was in 2018.

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the current agreed capacity of the Wind and Marine Energy Team is within HSE's Energy division; and how many of these roles are filled as of November 2022.

Kirsty Blackman: [\[101742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the HSE has plans to increase the agreed capacity of the Wind and Marine Energy Team within HSE's Energy division.

Mims Davies:

To date, the Wind and Marine Energy Team (WMET) at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) consists of an Operations Manager, a Team Leader and three HM Inspectors. This was the position in 2018. However, WMET is also supported by five Visiting Officers and Specialist HM Inspectors from across HSE.

HSE has recently recruited an additional HM Inspector into the WMET, who will be in post from next month, along with a new trainee HM Inspector, who will complete their training over the next two years.

HSE keeps the capacity of WMET under regular review to ensure it continues to meet the regulatory requirements of the sector.

■ Jobseeker's Allowance

Neale Hanvey: [\[100004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Job Seekers Allowance in each of the last five years, in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales, (iv) Northern Ireland, (v) each local authority and (vi) each constituency.

Neale Hanvey:

[100005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Income Support in each of the last five years, in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales, (iv) Northern Ireland, (v) each local authority and (vi) each constituency.

Guy Opperman:

The available information on the number of claimants who received benefits in the last five years, broken down by various geographies, is published and can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#). Benefits include Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Income Support, Jobseekers' Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

Benefit statistics for Northern Ireland are published by the [Department for Communities](#).

■ **Local Housing Allowance: Uprating**

Hywel Williams:

[101703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the decision not to uprate Local Housing Allowance in line with September 2022 CPI inflation on the proportion of homes available to rent in Wales in respect of which the requested rent would be fully covered by LHA rates in the next twelve months.

Mims Davies:

No recent assessment has been made.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates determine the maximum housing support available to claimants in the private rented sector. They are not intended to cover all rents in all areas.

We recognise that rents are increasing but the challenging fiscal environment means that difficult decisions were necessary to ensure support is targeted effectively. The Chancellor announced at Autumn Statement a package of targeted support worth £26 billion.

To protect the most vulnerable, working age and disability benefits will be increased in line with inflation for 2023-24, increasing expenditure by £11 billion in 23/24. In addition, to ensure that households will see an increase in their benefits following uprating – the benefit cap will also be increased in line with CPI (10.1%) in April 2023.

For those who require extra support, the government is extending the Household Support Fund providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England in the next financial year. In England this will be through an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £842 million, running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It will be for the

devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding (£158m).

For those who require additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are available. Since 2011 we have provided nearly £1.5 billion in funding for DHPs.

■ Universal Credit

Neale Hanvey:

[\[100003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Universal Credit in each of the last five years, in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales, (iv) Northern Ireland, (v) each local authority and (vi) each constituency.

Guy Opperman:

Information on UC expenditure breakdowns at Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency level prior to 2019/20 are not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit: Payments

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[101728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications for Hardship Payments for Universal Credit were (a) received and (b) approved in each of the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

It is not possible to respond to this Question with sufficient precision as there is no data on applications made.

■ Universal Credit: Students

Dan Carden:

[\[99971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government plans to reform Universal Credit to provide greater access to that benefit for students.

Guy Opperman:

The government has no plans to change eligibility rules for Universal Credit to provide greater access for students.

The core objective of Universal Credit is to support claimants to enter work, earn more or prepare for work in the future. Whilst financial support for higher/advanced education students comes from the current system of learner loans and grants designed for their needs, it is also a condition of entitlement for Universal Credit that the person must not be in full-time education.

Exceptions are made where students have additional needs that cannot be met through the student support system of loans and grants, such as being responsible for a child.

■ Universal Credit: Veterans

John Healey:

[\[101692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2022 to Question 72201 on Universal Credit: Veterans, how many Universal Credit claimants have been identified as (a) serving and (b) having previously served in the Armed Forces for the assessment periods ending in October 2022.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) started collecting data on the Armed Forces status of Universal Credit (UC) claimants in Great Britain (GB) in April 2021. Initially only new claimants were asked about their Armed Forces status. From June 2021 onwards, other UC claimants reporting changes in their work and earnings have also been able to report their status. From July 2021 onwards, UC agents have also been able to record claimants' Armed Forces status if they are told about this via other means such as journal messages, face-to-face meetings or by telephone.

Data coverage continues to improve over time and by October 2022 data was held on the armed forces status of approximately 56% of the GB UC caseload (see table below).

It should be noted that Armed forces status is self-reported by claimants and is not verified by the Ministry of Defence or Office for Veterans' Affairs. A claimant's status can be recorded as "currently serving", "served in the past", "not served" or "prefer not to say". Data is not collected on the specific branch of the Armed Forces that claimants are serving in or have served in in the past.

Data is not held on the total number of UC claimants who are currently serving in the Armed Forces or who have served in the past, but data is held on those who have identified themselves so far.

The way the data is collected means the claimants for whom an Armed Forces status is recorded are not representative of the UC caseload as a whole. This means it is not yet possible to produce reliable estimates of the overall number or proportion of UC claimants who are currently serving in the Armed Forces or who have served in the past.

Increases in the numbers of claimants, on UC, with a recorded status of "currently serving" or "served in the past" do not necessarily mean the overall numbers of claimants who are currently serving or have served in the past have increased and may reflect increases in the number of claimants for whom data is held as data coverage improves over time.

The table below shows the proportion of the GB UC caseload with a recorded Armed Forces status. It also shows how many claimants on the caseload had a recorded status of each type.

GB UC caseload by recorded Armed Forces status

UC CASELOAD MONTH	PROPORTION OF CASELOAD WITH A				
	RECORDED STATUS	CURRENTLY SERVING	SERVED IN THE PAST	NOT SERVED	PREFER NOT TO SAY"
October 2022	56%	3,400	43,500	3,173,000	23,800

Notes:

1. Data is not collected on the Armed Forces status of UC claimants in Northern Ireland. The figures provided only relate to Great Britain.
2. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percent and numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. Figures may be subject to retrospective changes as more up-to-date data becomes available or if methodological improvements are made.
4. Due to methodological improvements, these figures are based on the Official Statistics UC caseload definition. Some previous figures have used an alternative caseload definition based on assessment period end dates.
5. Further information on the caseload definition used for the UC official statistics can be found on Stat-Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

■ Work and Health Programme

Jonathan Ashworth: **[101731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have left the Work and Health programme as a result of finding employment in the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

The number of job outcomes each month for the Work and Health Programme is available on GOV.UK and can be found [here](#).

Jonathan Ashworth: **[101732]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much his Department has spent on the Work and Health programme in each of the last five calendar years.

Guy Opperman:

The contract costs for Work and Health Programme over the last 5 financial years.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Area	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
WHP – National Contracts	5,859,285	32,939,838	46,939,390	58,036,873	67,314,474

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
WHP – Devolved Contracts	887,827	13,044,931	15,947,618	17,138,146	16,730,739
Total	6,747,112	45,984,769	62,887,009	75,175,019	84,045,212

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

TRANSPORT

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Zarah Sultana:

[82456]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to promote research into electric vehicle charging road technology; and what assessment he has made of that technology's potential environmental benefits.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jesse Norman:

~~Government has committed £40 million in projects to support innovation in wireless and on-street electric vehicle charging technology.~~

~~£10 million of this investment is supporting the trial of wireless charging technologies for taxis in Nottingham, enabling drivers to “top-up” charge while waiting for their next fare. This project considers whether wireless charging can deliver additional environmental benefits for heavily utilised electric vehicles, by reducing the need for large batteries or range extender engines.~~

~~Wireless charging has several other potential commercial and consumer benefits, including improved accessibility.~~

The Government has committed £40 million in projects to support innovation in wireless and on-street electric vehicle charging technology

£10 million of this investment is supporting the trial of wireless charging technologies. This includes £3.4 million for charging taxis wirelessly in Nottingham, enabling drivers to “top-up” charge while waiting for their next fare. This project considers whether wireless charging can deliver additional environmental benefits for heavily utilised electric vehicles by reducing the need for large batteries or range extender engines

Wireless charging potentially has several other commercial and consumer experience benefits, including improved accessibility.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Post Office: Compensation for Horizon scandal**

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Grant Shapps): **[[HCWS420](#)]**

The Post Office Horizon scandal, which began over 20 years ago, has had a devastating impact on the lives of many postmasters. Starting in the late 1990s, the Post Office began installing Horizon accounting software, but faults in the software led to shortfalls in branches' accounts. The Post Office demanded sub-postmasters cover the shortfalls, and in many cases wrongfully prosecuted them between 1999 and 2015 for false accounting or theft.

The High Court Group Litigation Order case against the Post Office brought by 555 postmasters exposed the Horizon IT scandal, which had seen many postmasters forced to "repay" to Post Office sums that they had never received. In March 2022, the then Chancellor announced that further funding would be made available to ensure that members of the Group Litigation Order will receive similar levels of compensation to that which is available to their non - Group Litigation Order peers.

On 2 September my predecessor wrote to all postmasters in the Group Litigation Order group to ask for their views about whether BEIS or the Post Office should deliver the compensation scheme, and whether it should be organised along the lines of the Historical Shortfall Scheme or based on an Alternative Dispute Resolution approach. There was very strong support for the Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme, to be delivered by BEIS. Today I am announcing that this is the route that we will follow.

The informal consultation also requested views on other issues related to the scheme. Unsurprisingly, there was considerable concern among postmasters that the scheme should be subject to properly independent input. In the light of this, we have decided to create an independent advisory Board chaired by Professor Chris Hodges, an expert in alternative dispute resolution. The membership of that Board will include Lord Arbuthnot and Rt Hon Kevan Jones MP who are recognised by colleagues across Parliament for many years of outstanding campaigning for the wronged postmasters. The advisory Board will be supported by a BEIS secretariat.

Since the consultation closed a great deal of work has been done to develop the details of the scheme, drawing on the detailed comments made in response to the consultation. I am today writing to members of the Group Litigation Order with further information about how the scheme will work.

We are now asking claimants to prepare preliminary information about their claims. In parallel, we are working to engage Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists and lawyers to deliver it. Those experts should be on board in early Spring, and at that point full claims

will be submitted. I hope that compensation will start to flow before the summer, and that most cases can be resolved before the end of 2023.

We have already announced that we will meet postmasters' reasonable legal costs in claiming under the scheme. To enable lawyers to get to work on preparing claims, we are today announcing details of the costs tariff for the early phases of the scheme, which have been set by independent costs draftsmen. We will shortly be inviting claimants' lawyers to make proposals for the expert evidence which they will need. I am also pleased to say that the compensation payments will be disregarded for benefits purposes (once secondary legislation is in place).

I will deposit a copy of my letter to Group Litigation Order postmasters dated 7 December, the Group Litigation Order Consultation report, the Group Litigation Order Process map and the draft Group Litigation Order claim form in the Libraries of the House.

Overtaken Historical Convictions

I am also pleased to provide an update on Post Office's progress in delivering compensation to those with overturned historical convictions.

Lord Dyson considered the awards available for non-pecuniary damages, which are personal damages such as mental distress and loss of liberty, in an Early Neutral Evaluation process earlier this year. Since then, the Government has supported Post Office's approach to deliver compensation more swiftly by settling non-pecuniary claims first using the framework established by Lord Dyson. As of 1 December, 51 claims for non-pecuniary damages have been received and 37 offers made, worth £4.7m in addition to interim payments already paid.

Regarding pecuniary damages, which are financial damages such as loss of earnings, only 8 claims have been received to date, 2 of which have been settled in full and final settlement alongside their non-pecuniary damages. Government continues to encourage Post Office to process these claims as fast as possible.

As of 1 December, 82 claims for interim compensation have been received and 77 payments made, worth £7.7m. Post Office has also identified potential cases of hardship and offered and paid further hardship payments of £100,000 to 3 postmasters. Furthermore, following the recent statutory tax exemption and Early Neutral Evaluation, Post Office decided to increase the upper limit of interim payments for all future applicants to £163,000 (from the original upper level of £100,000). For those claimants who received the original interim payment amount of up to £100,000, Post Office have rightly been focussing on progressing and settling their non-pecuniary claims. However, where claimants who had received the original interim payment amount of up to £100,000 and were not able to submit a non-pecuniary claim by early December – and it is therefore unlikely that their non-pecuniary claim would be settled by the end of the year – Post Office has offered top-up payments of £63,000.

Historical Shortfall Scheme

I am also pleased to see the progress that the Post Office has made in delivering compensation to postmasters through the Historical Shortfall Scheme. As of 30 November, 93% of eligible claimants have been issued offers of compensation, totalling £70.8 million.

The cases that remain are some of the most complex and the Post Office is working to process these claims as soon as possible. However, the Government recognises the fact that those claimants who are yet to receive offers or payments may have been waiting for a considerable period of time for their cases to be settled. For these reasons, the Government is pleased that the Post Office will introduce interim payments for those who have yet to receive an offer or who have chosen to dispute their offer. This will be in addition to the existing hardship payments that the Post Office has already been providing to claimants in particularly difficult circumstances.

The Government announced in October that it is providing funding to Post Office to enable eligible late applications to be accepted into the Historical Shortfall Scheme. Post Office is beginning to process the late claims it has received to date, and I would encourage anyone else who thinks they might be eligible to get in touch with the Post Office at the earliest opportunity to discuss their claim.

Benefit Disregard

The Government is aware of the impact of the Horizon scandal on affected postmasters, resulting in significant financial hardship, including bankruptcy for some. Many postmasters have now received compensation payments which would take them over the £16,000 capital limit, rendering them ineligible to receive means-tested benefits and reducing pension credit entitlement. This risks prolonging the impacts of the Horizon scandal on these postmasters by affecting their eligibility to apply for benefits.

We are therefore introducing a benefits disregard for all Post Office and Horizon-related compensation. Once the secondary legislation for this disregard is in place, payments received by postmasters will no longer count towards the capital limit for means-tested benefits and pension credits and will therefore not affect their eligibility to claim for these.

The Government will legislate to put this disregard in place at the earliest possible opportunity.

DEFENCE

■ Defences's Support to Government Contingency Planning for Strike Action

Minister of State for the Armed Forces (James Heapey):

[\[HCWS417\]](#)

The provision of Defence support to civil authorities in the UK is governed by through the Military Aid to the Civil Authority (MACA) process which is driven by a robust and well-defined set of principles, set out in a publicly available Joint Doctrine Publication. These are that MACA may be authorised when:

- there is a definite need to act and the tasks our Armed Forces are being asked to perform are clear;

- other options, including mutual aid and commercial alternatives, have been discounted; and
- either:
 - the civil authority lacks the necessary capability to fulfil the task and it is unreasonable or prohibitively expensive to expect it to develop one; or
 - the civil authority has all or some capability, but it may not be available immediately, or to the required scale, and the urgency of the task requires rapid external support from the MOD.

HOME OFFICE

■ Consultation seeking views on additional agencies to be granted Accredited Financial Investigation powers

The Minister of State for Security (Tom Tugendhat):

[\[HCWS419\]](#)

I intend to lay a statutory instrument before the House next year which will amend the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (References to Financial Investigators) (England and Wales and Northern Ireland) Order 2021/640 to ensure that the new powers introduced in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill are operational and able to be used by accredited financial investigators.

This SI will also grant Accredited Financial Investigator powers to an additional 5 agencies. This will bring the total number of agencies with access to these powers to 41 in addition to all police forces and local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Accredited Financial Investigator powers grant civilians working for that agency access to certain Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 powers, which assist in the effective recovery of proceeds of a crime that falls under that agency's jurisdiction.

The following organisations have sought access to Accredited Financial Investigator powers:

- Security Industry Authority
- Food Standards Agency
- Environment Agency
- Public Sector Fraud Authority
- Department for Work and Pensions

I have assessed the value of extending the powers to each of these agencies—in particular whether effective criminal justice outcomes could be reached in their jurisdictions without access to these powers—and I have provisionally concluded that we should seek to grant the powers to all five. However, I intend to seek the views of the wider public as to whether these organisations should be granted these powers.

As such, I am today publishing a consultation for twelve weeks. This consultation will seek to establish the views from the public on whether or not these organisations should be granted the financial investigator powers.

A copy of the consultation document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and also made available on GOV.UK.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Electoral Commission – Performance Standards for Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers

Minister for Local Government and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): [\[HCWS421\]](#)

In accordance with section 9A of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (“PPERA”), I am laying before Parliament the Electoral Commission’s new performance standards for Returning Officers and updated performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006, through amendments to PERA, gave the Electoral Commission powers to set and monitor performance standards for electoral services. Under these provisions, the commission can determine and publish standards of performance for relevant electoral officers in Great Britain.

Following a consultation, the Electoral Commission has established a new set of standards for Returning Officers and made updates to the existing standards for Electoral Registration Officers. The new standards reflect changes made by the Elections Act 2022 which include measures to strengthen electoral integrity and prevent electoral fraud and ensuring the accessibility of voting in polling stations.

I welcome the Electoral Commission’s updates to the performance standards to reflect the current legislative requirements, which will support the delivery of well-run electoral services and elections, and effective and consistent implementation of measures in the Elections Act 2022.

A copy of the performance standards will be deposited in the library of each House.

The attachments can be viewed online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electoral-commission-performance-standards>

■ English Freeports Update

Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison): [\[HCWS418\]](#)

Today I am announcing a major milestone for the flagship UK Freeports programme, with the first English Freeports – in Plymouth, Solent, and Teesside – now fully up and running after receiving final government approval. Each of these Freeports will now receive £25 million of seed funding and potentially hundreds of millions in locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside a generous package of trade and innovation support for businesses locating there.

This significant milestone is an important step on the Freeports journey and sends a clear message: the UK Government is backing these places as a key part of its economic strategy.

Freeports are at the heart of the Government's Levelling Up agenda. They will unlock much-needed investment into port communities and their hinterlands. This in turn will help these areas overcome the barriers holding them back and bring jobs and opportunity to some of the UK's historically overlooked communities.

Freeports catalyse investment through a combination of tax reliefs on new economic activity, a special streamlined customs procedure, an ambitious programme of public investment, and wide-ranging support from the UK Government to help businesses trade, invest, and innovate.

Excellent progress has been made with delivery: investors can now take advantage of tax reliefs in all eight English Freeports and are starting to do so, and we expect the remaining five English Freeports to join Plymouth, Solent, and Teesside in receiving final approvals shortly.

This Government also remains committed to ensuring that all four corners of the UK can reap the benefits of our Freeports programme. We have recently concluded competitions for two Green Freeports in Scotland and a Freeport in Wales, and we will announce the winning locations in due course. We also continue discussions with stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how best to deliver the benefits associated with Freeports there.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Fifth Substantive Report of the Independent Reporting Commission

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chris Heaton-Harris): [\[HCWS422\]](#)

I have received the fifth substantive report from the Independent Reporting Commission.

The Commission was established following the Fresh Start Agreement of November 2015 to report on progress towards ending paramilitary activity. That Agreement set out the Northern Ireland Executive's commitments around tackling paramilitary activity and associated criminality, and led to a programme of work to deliver a Northern Ireland Executive Action Plan. It also provided the framework for the UK Government, the Executive and law enforcement agencies, working with partners in Ireland, to work together to tackle the challenges of organised crime, paramilitarism and terrorism. In the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) Agreement in January 2020, a commitment was made to ongoing work to tackle paramilitarism, and this work continues, including through a second phase of the NI Executive programme.

This fifth substantive report builds on the work already undertaken by the Commissioners. I welcome the progress it highlights in a number of areas including disruptions to paramilitary groups as a result of operations by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force, the downward trend in some aspects of paramilitary activity demonstrated by PSNI security statistics, and the reduction in the Northern Ireland-related Terrorism threat level from

SEVERE to SUBSTANTIAL. I also welcome the success and positive impact, noted by the Commissioners, that the Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme is having through its focus on the development of a whole of government approach, and joined up and integrated working across the public and community and voluntary sectors, and through its emphasis on interventions informed by strong evidence and data.

Yet the report also notes that the problem of paramilitarism is enduring. The criminal activity and coercive control exercised by paramilitary groups continue to cause harm to communities and individuals across Northern Ireland. A number of incidents in recent weeks have demonstrated the callous disregard that paramilitary groups, or those who claim affiliation with them, have for public safety, and the harm and disruption they continue to cause to the communities they often claim to represent.

The Commissioners have set out a number of recommendations on how the effort to tackle paramilitarism can be enhanced, including a recommendation for the UK Government, and others, on the need for a formal process of engagement with paramilitary groups aimed at facilitating their transition towards disbandment. We will continue to consider this recommendation through engagement with representatives of NI political parties, the NI Executive, the Irish Government, with civic society and community representatives in Northern Ireland, and with the Independent Reporting Commission.

Paramilitarism was never justified in the past, and cannot be justified today. As we approach the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, it is important that we remind ourselves of the extraordinary progress that has been made since then on peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland. Yet it's clear that a sustained effort is required here over the long term to tackle the enduring problem of paramilitarism. We remain committed to delivering our vision of a safer Northern Ireland and to working with partners to support efforts against the enduring threat and harms posed to communities by terrorist and paramilitary groups.

Political leadership from across the political spectrum in Northern Ireland is essential to ensure it remains clear there is no place for paramilitarism, or the division it stems from, in Northern Ireland. It is a matter of profound disappointment that the local political parties have been unable to restore fully functioning devolved institutions. The lack of a functioning Executive inhibits Northern Ireland Departments from taking a strategic, cross-cutting approach to tackling paramilitarism in partnership with the PSNI and the wider public sector. It remains my top priority to rectify the present situation.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Commissioners for their continued work reporting on progress towards ending paramilitarism.