



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 December 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:12 P.M., 08 December 2022). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Incentives

Emily Thornberry:

[\[102837\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December to Question 97593, how much her Department spent on purchasing non-cash vouchers for staff as reward and recognition bonuses under the Edenred contract in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19, (c) 2019-20, (d) 2020-21 and (e) 2021-22.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Attorney General's office spent the following on non-cash vouchers for staff: 2021-22 £1,860 2020-21 £4,460 2019-20 £3,700 2018-19 £4,780 2017-18 £2,100

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ EDF Energy: Low Carbon Contracts Company

Alan Brown:

[\[102880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether a backstop date has been agreed between the Low Carbon Contracts Company and EDF for the purposes of (a) possible contract termination and (b) the start of the Hinkley Point C Contract for Difference.

Graham Stuart:

The Longstop Date in the Hinkley Point C (HPC) contract, the point at which the Contract for Difference (CfD) may be terminated for non-completion, has moved from 1 November 2033 to 1 November 2036. The extension reflects the work of the Low Carbon Contracts Company with the HPC project to understand the impacts of COVID-19, and the outcome of BEIS' negotiations with China General Nuclear and EDF on Sizewell C. It has no impact on the project's anticipated delivery date and consumers will pay nothing towards HPC until the project starts generating electricity.

The Longstop Date is the latest possible date that the CfD could start. EDF is targeting commencement of electricity generation at HPC, and therefore the start of the CfD, in June 2027.

■ Electric Vehicles: Batteries

Julian Sturdy:

[\[99816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing Government support for the (a) electric vehicle and (b) vehicle batteries manufacturing industries to help meet the Government's net zero targets.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

We are determined to ensure the UK remains one of the best locations in the world for automotive manufacturing as we transition to electric vehicles. As part of this, we continue to work with investors through the Automotive Transformation Fund to progress plans to build a globally competitive electric vehicle supply chain in the UK. In 2021 the Net Zero Strategy announced £350 of funding in the Automotive Transformation Fund. This funding is additional to the £500m announced in 2020 for this programme as part of the 10 Point Plan.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: District Heating and Park Homes

Peter Gibson:

[\[99990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will set out the mechanism for receipt of support through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme for (a) persons whose energy is supplied as part of a heat network and (b) residents of park homes.

Graham Stuart:

Heat network suppliers and park home site owners who are supported by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) are required to pass this support on, in a just and reasonable way, to end users.

This is set out in legislation. Full guidance on the mechanism for passing through this support is set out in the [scheme guidance](#).

■ Energy: Meters

Dan Carden:

[\[102928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 Dec 2022 to Question 98824, what (a) assessment he has made of the level of compliance with Ofgem's rules on the force-fitting of prepayment meters and (b) steps he is taking to improve compliance.

Graham Stuart:

As the independent energy regulator, it's Ofgem's role to assess the level of compliance with its rules on the force-fitting of prepayment meters and consider steps to improve suppliers' compliance where required.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[102949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many warrants have been issued to move non-smart meter energy customers to pre-payment meters in (i) the UK (ii) each constituency in 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Neither the Government nor Ofgem, the independent regulator, collect this data at the constituency level.

Ofgem's latest data shows that the number of warrants exercised in Great Britain to install a pre-payment meter was 49,552 in 2021. Ofgem does not collect data on this in Northern Ireland.

■ Environment Protection: Job Creation

Stephen Morgan:

[\[99981\]](#)

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 Portsmouth South constituency.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS is working with DfE and local partners to ensure green skills are considered through Local Skills Improvement Plans. The Government is also 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.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Training

Bill Esterson:

[\[102817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2022 to Question 92184, whether he has plans to improve the rate of the number of registered installers eligible to participate in government energy efficiency measure installation schemes.

Graham Stuart:

In September this year, BEIS launched a £9.2 million Home Decarbonisation Skills Training Competition. This has awarded funding to organisations to deliver 9,000 training courses across England to the building retrofit, energy efficiency and heat pump sectors. It will fund training to upskill those already working in these sectors, as well as bringing new installers into the industry. This will help to develop skills within the supply chain to deliver improvements to buildings through government-funded energy efficiency schemes.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Training**Jim Shannon:**[\[99846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of UK100's Skills for Local Net Zero Delivery insight briefing, published 11 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Government welcomes UK100's report and will consider its recommendations. The Government recognises that local areas, as well as national government, have a key role to play in ensuring we have the skills needed for the transition to Net Zero.

■ Newport Wafer Fab: Staff**Wayne David:**[\[99753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to meet the Newport Wafer Fab Staff Association.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The decisions of the Secretary of State under the National Security & Investment Act are quasi-judicial. As is required under the NSI Act, the Secretary of State considered all representations made before making the Final Order. It would not be appropriate for the Secretary of State to discuss his decision.

■ Offshore Industry: North Sea**Caroline Lucas:**[\[99796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to analysis by the International Energy Agency which finds that at least 72% of energy sector methane emissions can be reduced with existing technologies, what steps is he taking to ensure that oil and gas operations in the North Sea urgently tackle their gas leaks and losses.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave the Hon. Member for Swansea West on 27th October 2022 to Question [69484](#).

■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Sefton Central**Bill Esterson:**[\[102815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November 2022 to Question 95829, how much funding through grants the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme provided to public sector bodies in Sefton Central constituency.

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>.

■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Wallasey

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[102800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the cost to the public purse of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has been in Wallasey has of 24 November 2022.

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>.

■ Swimming Pools: Energy

Julian Sturdy: [\[99817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support local swimming pools with the cost of energy.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all eligible businesses and other non-domestic customers, including swimming pools, are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

■ Tidal Power: Research

Wera Hobhouse: [\[99942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of setting up public a body, analogous to Wave Energy Scotland, in the context of conducting research and development in the field of tidal power.

Graham Stuart:

The Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult is the UK's leading innovation centre for offshore renewable energy, including tidal power. The Government established it in 2013.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Bexleyheath and Crayford

Sir David Evennett: [\[99747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people have received the Warm Homes Discount in Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency as of 30 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

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

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Accountancy****John Cryer:**[\[101390\]](#)

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 Department, including predecessor Departments and its agencies.

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.

■ **Inflation: Christmas****Sarah Olney:**[\[102866\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the impact of inflation on the average price of a (a) turkey, (b) Christmas pudding, (c) brandy and (d) Christmas cracker in each of the last three years.

Sarah Olney:[\[102867\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the impact of inflation on games and toys for the domestic market in each of the last five years.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Questions of 5 December is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response to 102866/102867 [\[UKSA Response to PQ102866 PQ102867 \(1\).pdf\]](#)

■ Places for Growth Programme: Stoke on Trent**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[902672\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to support the opening of a Home Office innovation centre in Stoke-on-Trent as part of the Places for Growth programme.

Jeremy Quin:

Places for Growth is relocating 22,000 roles from London by 2030, increasing opportunities and providing an economic boost to cities and towns across the UK.

The Home Office has a comprehensive Stoke-on-Trent programme and has already recruited around 100 of the 500 roles that will be based at the Stoke-on-Trent Innovation Centre by 2025. Officials continue to work closely with the City Council and local organisations on this work.

■ Public Sector: Procurement**Dan Carden:**[\[101777\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to strengthen counter-fraud measures for public procurement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is committed to rooting out fraud and corruption in public procurement. All contracting authorities must act and be seen to act with integrity.

We have worked closely with the Serious Fraud Office, the Competition and Markets Authority and other experts to strengthen the rules around supplier exclusion through measures in the Procurement Bill and ensure that suppliers with a track record of fraud or corruption will be excluded from procurements, and cannot be awarded public contracts unless they can demonstrate that the circumstances giving rise to the fraud or corruption are not likely to occur again.

In addition, the Government has established the Public Sector Fraud Authority as part of a range of measures to tackle waste and inefficiency across the public sector. The Public Sector Fraud Authority is a new team at the heart of Government which works with departments and public bodies to understand and reduce the impact of fraud.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****John Healey:**[\[102765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many ARAP-eligible (a) principals and (b) family members have arrived in the UK in each of the last six months.

James Heappey:

The information requested can be found in the table below:

MONTH	ARAP ELIGIBLE PRINCIPALS RELOCATED TO THE UK	ARAP ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS RELOCATED TO THE UK	TOTAL NUMBER OF ARAP RELOCATED INDIVIDUALS
June 2022	38	163	201
July 2022	39	377	416
August 2022	84	330	414
September 2022	133	516	649
October 2022	79	315	394
November 2022	73	330	403

The figures for family members include family members automatically eligible for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme by virtue of their relationship to a principal applicant, and Additional Family Members (AFM) relocated to the UK under the ARAP scheme.

We estimate that a very small number of the AFM figures captured in the above statistics will have been relocated via other HM Government resettlement schemes. Due to data constraints, we are currently unable to provide this breakdown.

■ Africa: Defence

John Healey:

[\[98670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to (a) develop and (b) publish a defence and security strategy for the UK's involvement in the African continent.

James Heappey:

Defence is supporting the Government's update to the Integrated Review. The Department welcomes this opportunity to strengthen our capabilities and prioritise our activities to ensure the UK remains ready to deter adversaries in a new era of strategic competition.

We recognise the strategic importance of Africa to UK interests, however any specific policy changes or updates to sub-strategies required related to defence capability and regional activity will be determined once the update to the Integrated Review and the update to the Defence Command Paper have concluded.

■ Agnes Wanjiru

John Healey:

[\[97443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with the Kenyan authorities about the investigation into the murder of Agnes Wanjiru.

James Heappey:

I undertook an official visit to Kenya in November to meet with key Ministers and Members of the new Kenyan Parliament. This provided me with a valuable opportunity to discuss with them the investigation into the alleged murder of Agnes Wanjiru. I and my counterparts, agreed on the importance of making progress on the investigation and ensuring justice for the Wanjiru family.

■ **Air Force: Training****John Healey:**[\[100890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November to Question 96565 on Air Force: Training, how many (a) UK and (b) non UK pilots are awaiting training at each RAF base as of 1 December 2022.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

On 1 December 2022 there were 200 UK pilots conducting supplementary training/courses or fulfilling holding roles at Royal Air Force (RAF) bases whilst awaiting the next stage of their flying training.

RAF STATION LOCATIONS	NO OF UK PILOTS HOLDING
Lossiemouth	10
Waddington	20
Coningsby	~
Cranwell	30
Benson	10
Brize Norton	20
Cosford	~
Shawbury	10
University Air Squadrons	50
Halton	~
Henlow	~
Air Command High Wycombe	~
Marham	~
Northolt	10
Odiham	10
Syerston	~

RAF STATION LOCATIONS	NO OF UK PILOTS HOLDING
Valley	10
Wittering	20
Leeming	~

There has always been planned holding periods in the flying training pipeline to ensure all courses are fully utilised. Trainee pilots on hold fulfil required and essential roles within the Armed Forces with the aim to expand their skills in other areas of the Ministry of Defence and to prepare them to be the future leaders of the Armed Forces.

On 1 December 2022 there were five or less non-UK pilots at RAF Shawbury awaiting the start date of the next course.

Due to the small populations generated by this level of detail, and the possibility of identifying individual personnel, data have been rounded to 10 and therefore totals may not always equal the sum of the parts. When rounding to the nearest 10, numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias. "-" denotes zero and "~" denotes a number less than or equal to 5.

■ Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease

Luke Pollard:

[\[103014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 70978 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, if he will make an assessment of roles within the Armed Forces which are suitable for an applicant who has a family history of Huntington's disease.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

All Armed Forces entrants are expected to be able to serve for the full period of their engagement. Consequently, the medical entry standards for the Armed Forces are stringent, with a number of medical conditions currently being considered a bar to Service that would not be an impediment in other careers.

However, each application to join the Armed Forces is considered on a case by case basis and, if rejected on medical grounds, a candidate can appeal the decision with additional medical information. There is also an executive waiver process where the employing Service may, exceptionally, recruit someone who is below the normal entry standards. This may include individuals with unique specialist skills that outweigh any functional limitations they might have. Again, this would be determined on a case by case basis.

■ AUKUS: Canada**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[98685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether (a) Australia, (b) the United States of America and (c) the UK have held talks with their Canadian counterparts on the prospect of Canada joining AUKUS.

Alex Chalk:

AUKUS is a commitment to strengthen defence and security relationships with likeminded allies. The UK regularly holds discussions with Canada about our security and defence cooperation.

■ Criminal Justice (Armed Forces Code of Practice for Victims of Crime) Regulations 2015**Stella Creasy:**[\[102914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans he has to (a) revoke (b) replace and (c) retain the Criminal Justice (Armed Forces Code of Practice for Victims of Crime) Regulations 2015.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to supporting fully those victims of crime who are going through the Service Justice System. Our current Armed Forces Code of Practice for Victims of Crime will be retained in law and updated to reflect provisions for civilians, adapted where necessary for the Service environment. The legislative basis for the Armed Forces Code will be changed so that it forms part of UK, rather than European Union, law.

■ Defence: Expenditure**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[93479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Autumn Statement, what financial support his Department will receive to ensure that defence spending is protected from inflation and does not fall in 2023.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I welcomed the Autumn Statement and Chancellor's recognition of the need to increase defence spending at the Spring Budget. In order to protect defence spending before that increase is agreed, the Chancellor has provided me access to Treasury reserves and new spending flexibilities. This includes a further £2.3 billion for military support to Ukraine; additional funding for replenishment of stocks already donated to Ukraine; £560 million of new investment in our critical stockpiles; and further Dreadnought contingency. As a result, according to Treasury forecasts, Defence spending will be protected from inflation next year and forecast to grow to nearly £50 billion.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[102847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he will respond to the correspondence of 27 June 2022 from the hon. Member for North Durham on Non-Disclosure Agreements and Invitations To Negotiate in his Department.

Alex Chalk:

My hon. Friend the previous Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin) responded to the right hon. Member's correspondence of 27 June 2022 on 7 July 2022.

Attachments:

1. Jeremy Quin Letter [\[20220706 Non Disclosure Agreement 4.5.2.8 Kevan Jones MP mindp amends - Copy.pdf\]](#)

■ Military Aid

John Healey: [\[100892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests were received by his Department from the Home Office each month in 2022.

John Healey: [\[100893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests were received by his Department from the Home Office in each year since 2015.

John Healey: [\[100894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 86666 on Military Aid, which Departments made each of the 63 approved Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests.

James Heappey:

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

Attachments:

1. Military Aid [\[UIN 86646.docx\]](#)

■ Ministry of Defence: Accountancy

John Cryer: [\[101686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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 Department, including predecessor Departments and its agencies.

Alex Chalk:

Since 2010, the Ministry of Defence has placed almost 500 contracts with the specified companies. As such, a full departmental response could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Providing a breakdown of contract value by year would also result in double counting due to contracts being open over multiple years. However, the table below provides total payments to each named accountancy firm by financial year from 2010-11 to 2021-22:

YEAR	DELOITTE	ERNST & YOUNG	KPMG	PRICE WATER HOUSE COOPERS
2010-11	£8,168,445.53	£2,683,161.84	£1,728,593.60	£1,791,963.49
2011-12	£10,951,834.45	£491,725.31	£10,314,788.86	£2,246,947.04
2012-13	£19,340,635.84	£3,654,767.98	£13,045,832.64	£5,429,556.75
2013-14	£29,303,187.02	£17,258,840.61	£25,308,805.37	£12,842,676.27
2014-15	£20,013,586.16	£17,524,671.44	£39,337,383.47	£10,609,715.97
2015-16	£15,202,474.72	£19,053,613.65	£36,521,054.51	£17,586,800.77
2016-17	£20,233,808.07	£19,446,071.68	£35,339,261.27	£27,606,130.15
2017-18	£27,462,233.65	£9,152,441.79	£41,899,779.10	£17,889,239.14
2018-19	£15,678,160.05	£4,382,347.73	£34,182,223.95	£11,665,882.56
2019-20	£26,731,275.78	£6,202,441.02	£53,492,911.25	£10,701,954.37
2020-21	£28,581,384.49	£3,018,831.14	£42,684,056.10	£16,341,632.65
2021-22	£35,256,836.67	£7,559,486.41	£25,266,455.76	£10,215,022.30
Total	£256,923,862.43	£110,428,400.60	£359,121,145.88	£144,927,521.46

It should be noted that the composition of the totals has varied over time. For example, the payments by procurement card are included from 2011/12 onwards, and expenditure by DSTL and the UK Hydrographic Office is included from 2013-14 onwards.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark:**[100928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Alex Chalk:

The Secretary of State for Defence and the Ministry of Defence Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) have had one meeting between 1 June to 31 August 2022. CSA has also had meetings with other Defence Ministers; twice between 1 March to 31 May and three times between 1 June to 31 August 2022.

■ Ministry of Defence: Health and Social Care Levy**John Healey:**[\[99726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Answer of 30 November to Question 96564 on Ministry of Defence: Health and Social Care Levy, what the total value of funding is provided to cover the Health and Social Care Levy in financial year 2022-23 that will be retained by his Department.

John Healey:[\[99727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2022 to Question 96564 on Ministry of Defence: Health and Social Care Levy, what the total value is of funding provided to cover the Health and Social Care Levy in the 2023-24 financial year that will be returned to the Treasury.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The total value of funding provided to cover the Health and Social Care Levy in financial year 2022-23 is £113 million.

■ Ministry of Defence: Indo-Pacific Region**Liam Byrne:**[\[99733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there has been a change in the number of his Department's (a) personnel and (b) assets in the Indo-Pacific region since 16 March 2021.

James Heappey:

Following the commitments made in the Defence Command Paper in support of the UK's Indo-Pacific tilt, the period since 16 March 2021 has seen an increase in both MOD personnel and MOD assets permanently deployed to the Indo-Pacific region.

This increase in personnel supports the expansion of the UK's Defence Network, including the establishment of a British Defence Staff for Oceania, in Canberra and Defence Advisor and Attaché posts in Fiji and the Philippines respectively.

Over the same period, the number of assets in the region has also increased. Following the conclusion of the Carrier Strike Group deployment, HMS Spey and Tamar were permanently stationed in the region at the end of 2021.

Liam Byrne:[\[99735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there has been a change in his Department's (a) departmental expenditure limit and (b) annually managed expenditure spending in the Indo-Pacific region since 16 March 2021.

James Heappey:

This information is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Type 32 Frigates: Procurement

John Healey: [\[102768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the Type 32 frigate programme.

Alex Chalk:

Development work for the Type 32 Frigate programme is continuing to be undertaken across a number of defence organisations and programmes. The information on costing for this programme is not held in the format requested and I will write to the right hon. Member with further detail.

John Healey: [\[102769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to restart development of the Type 32 frigate programme.

John Healey: [\[102771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, has what assessment he has made of the impact of the decision by Navy Command to withdraw plans for the Type 32 frigate programme on its (a) initial and (b) full operating capability dates.

Alex Chalk:

The Type 32 Frigate programme remains in the concept phase, and the programme and procurement strategy will be decided following the completion of the concept phase.

John Healey: [\[102770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 20 of the NAO report on the Equipment Plan 2022 to 2032, HC 907, published on 29 November, what assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of the decision by Navy Command to withdraw plans for the Type 32 frigate programme.

Alex Chalk:

The Type 32 Frigate programme remains in the concept phase, and the programme and procurement strategy will be decided following the completion of the concept phase.

■ War Widows: Pensions

John Healey: [\[102766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution of 15 March 2021 by the then Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Official Report, column 22, what steps he has taken to examine all possibilities to resolve historic issues relating to war widows' pensions.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Government recognises the unique commitment that service families make and remains sympathetic to the circumstances of those who remarried and cohabited before 1 April 2015. Successive Governments have had a policy against retrospective reinstatement.

As previously stated by the Defence Secretary in the House, the Department is examining alternative methods to see whether we can mitigate the impact of these changes. We have consulted the Chair of the War Widows Association and HM Treasury.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[102797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to accede to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is fully committed to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the UK.

As with any international treaty, UK ratification of UNESCO Conventions should be considered fully, taking into account value for money to the UK taxpayer and the interests of both the Devolved Administrations and our Overseas Territories. When this process has been completed, Ministers will take a decision on the merits of ratification.

■ Digital Technology: EU Law**Stewart Hosie:**[\[99766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to introduce provisions relating to EU regulation 2022/2065 regarding a single market for digital services.

Paul Scully:

The Government is focused on making the UK the safest place in the world to be online. To that aim, the Government introduced the Online Safety Bill in March this year and it is continuing its passage through Parliament.

We are firmly committed to international cooperation to promote a safer online environment.

English National Opera

Sarah Olney: [\[99938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to support the English National Opera.

Sarah Olney: [\[99939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will work with Arts Council England to commission a strategic review of opera provision.

Stuart Andrew:

I refer the Hon Member for Richmond Park to my previous answers on this matter, including [97388](#) and [97389](#) to the Rt Hon Member for Camberwell and Peckham.

Gambling Act 2005 Review

Jessica Morden: [\[102809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the Gambling Act White Paper.

Paul Scully:

The Gambling Act Review is wide-ranging and aims to ensure regulation is fit for the digital age. We will publish a White Paper setting out our vision and next steps in the coming weeks.

Indo-Pacific Region: Expenditure

Liam Byrne: [\[99739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether there has been a change in her Department's (a) departmental expenditure limit and (b) annually managed expenditure spending in the Indo-Pacific region since 16 March 2021.

Paul Scully:

The publication of the Integrated Review in March 2021 affirmed the UK's increased focus and long-term commitment to the Indo-Pacific.

DCMS does not capture spend by region. However, the department's International Directorate has established a bespoke team to lead our Indo-Pacific and China Strategy and Engagement. This shift in focus and resource has been underway for the past year and has resulted in increased collaboration with key regional partners.

Social Media and Technology: Russia

Wayne David: [\[102840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions the Government has had with (a) social media and (b) technology companies to help ensure that their platforms are not being used to disseminate Russian propaganda.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issue of disinformation seriously. The DCMS-led Counter Disinformation Unit (CDU) works to identify and counter Russian disinformation, working closely with cross Whitehall partners and the major social media platforms. The CDU encourages platforms to swiftly remove disinformation and coordinated inauthentic or manipulated behaviour, as per their Terms of Service and engages regularly with social media companies and technology companies to understand policy changes and other countermeasures related to Russian information activities, and the effectiveness of these actions.

■ Social Media: Mental Health**Angela Crawley:**[\[102909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to regulate social media algorithms to reduce user exposure to (a) self-harm and (b) suicide-related content.

Paul Scully:

Under the Online Safety Bill, all platforms will need to undertake risk assessments for illegal content and content that is harmful to children. This will ensure they understand the risks associated with their services, including in relation to their algorithms. They will then need to put in place proportionate systems and processes to mitigate these risks.

Platforms that are likely to be accessed by children will need to fulfil these duties in relation to harmful content and activity, including legal self-harm and suicide content. Assisting suicide has also been designated as a priority offence in the Bill, so all platforms will be required to take proactive steps to tackle this type of illegal content. The government will also bring forward a new self-harm offence. Companies will therefore need to remove communications that intentionally encourage or assist self-harm.

The largest platforms will also have a duty to offer all adult users tools to reduce their exposure to certain kinds of legal content. On 29 November the government announced its intention for these tools to apply to legal self-harm and suicide content. These tools could include the option of switching off algorithmically recommended content.

■ Sports: Abuse**Stephen Hammond:**[\[100930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to reduce instances of abuse in sport.

Stuart Andrew:

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount.

National Governing Bodies are responsible for the regulation of their sports and for ensuring that appropriate measures are in place to protect participants from harm. With that in mind, we expect sports to do all they can to protect their athletes.

Earlier this year the Government introduced legislation to extend the definition of a 'position of trust' within the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to include sports coaches, making a vital step in making our sports clubs more secure to young people. This came into force on 28 June 2022.

Sport England is expanding its safeguarding case management pilot service for grassroots sport, established to help sporting organisations access expert support in relation to safeguarding concerns and referrals.

UK Sport's new Sport Integrity disclosure and complaints pilot launched in May 2022 to support athletes, coaches and support personnel within the Olympic and Paralympic high-performance community across the UK, helping National Governing Bodies to uphold the highest standards of conduct in their sports. UK Sport will also include consideration of whether further measures to strengthen the integrity of sport are needed.

All funded sports must meet a number of conditions in relation to safeguarding and duty of care. They must comply with the Code for Sports Governance, including the appointment of a lead director for welfare and safety. They must also have appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of children and adults at risk. They must comply with, maintain and embed the Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport for organisations working with children and young people and working towards and maintaining the Safeguarding Adults in Sport Framework for those organisations working with adults at risk.

We remain committed to working with the sports sector to help ensure the safety of all participants in sport.

EDUCATION

■ Department for Education: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark:

[\[100917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, 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.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education had two meetings with the Department's Chief Scientific Advisor between 1 December 2021 and 28 February 2022, one meeting between 1 March and 31 May 2022, and one meeting between 1 June and 31 August 2022. Baroness Barran also met with the Chief Scientific Advisor on 15 March 2022.

Following the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser's regular attendance at the Scientific Advisor Group for Emergencies (SAGE), advice was shared with the Secretary of State, ministers, and senior officials consistently via email. More generally, the Department draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise.

■ Education: Finance

Emma Hardy:

[\[101046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the funding rate per pupil for (a) schools, (b) sixth-form colleges and (c) further education colleges was in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

The schools National Funding Formula (NFF) calculates an allocation for every school, based on their individual pupil and school characteristics. The table below shows the average funding per pupil allocated through the NFF for England over the past five years. Per pupil funding excludes growth funding and individual schools' actual allocations are based on Local Authorities' local funding formulae.

FINANCIAL YEAR	AVERAGE PER PUPIL FUNDING THROUGH THE SCHOOLS NFF
2018/19	£4,585
2019/20	£4,640
2020/21	£4,828
2021/22	£5,212
2022/23	£5,358

The national funding rate per student for 16 to 19-year-olds and young people aged up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is the same for all institution types.

The table below shows the national funding rate for the last five academic years for a full-time student aged 16 to 19 and young people aged up to 25 with SEND.

ACADEMIC YEAR	NATIONAL FUNDING RATE
2018/19	£4,000
2019/20	£4,000
2020/21	£4,188
2021/22	£4,188
2022/23	£4,542

The increase to the national funding rate for the 2022/23 academic year includes funding to roll in the Teachers' Pay Grant with an equivalent uplift for other institutions, funding for the additional hours policy, and an affordable increase for inflation. Details related to the 2022/23 funding rate are available in published guidance, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-information-for-2022-to-2023>. Rates for all funding bands are published annually at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula>.

■ Primary Education: Mental Health Services

Ian Byrne: **[103032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in England currently employ a (a) play and (b) creative arts therapist.

Ian Byrne: **[103033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in (a) the City of Liverpool and (b) Liverpool West Derby constituency currently employ a (a) play and (b) creative arts therapist.

Nick Gibb:

The 2022 Schools White Paper set out the Government's plan for all schools to provide safe, calm, and supportive school environments, with targeted academic, pastoral and specialist support, helping children and young people to fulfil their potential.

It is for schools to decide what support or therapies they provide, taking into account the needs of their pupils.

The roles of staff employed by schools is collected as part of the annual School Workforce Census each November. The data can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Data from the November 2022 census is currently being collected and will be published in the summer of 2023.

■ Schools: Finance

Mrs Pauline Latham: **[102848]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how the additional funding for schools announced in the Autumn Statement will be distributed.

Nick Gibb:

On 6 December, the Department confirmed further details on how the £2 billion additional funding for schools announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement will be allocated in 2023/24.

£400 million will be allocated to Local Authorities' high needs budgets, with the rest allocated to schools through a new grant, and to boost the pupil premium.

Mainstream schools will receive this additional funding through a new grant from April 2023, on top of the core funding allocations they receive via the National Funding Formula. The methodology for calculating allocations for schools via this new grant will largely mirror that of the 2022/23 Schools Supplementary Grant. The Department will publish further details and funding rates for the new grant before the end of December 2022.

For a typical primary school with 200 pupils, this new revenue equates to approximately £28,000 additional funding. It equates to approximately £170,000 for a typical secondary school with 900 pupils.

Local Authorities will be obliged to pass on increases comparable to that for mainstream schools to special and alternative provision schools, from the £400 million that will be allocated to their high needs budgets. The Department will confirm details on how this will work shortly.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[102849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is providing additional funding to schools whose budgets fall below the minimum per pupil funding level.

Nick Gibb:

The minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPLs) in the schools National Funding Formula have been set so that, in the 2023/24 financial year, every primary school will receive at least £4,405 per pupil, and every secondary school at least £5,715.

All schools, including schools funded by reference to the MPPLs, will also receive additional funding in the 2023/24 financial year, following the 2022 Autumn Statement. A typical 200 pupil primary school can be expected to receive approximately £28,000, on average. A typical 900 pupil secondary school can be expected to receive £170,000. The Department will announce further details on allocations shortly.

The MPPL values are compulsory in Local Authority funding formulae, which determine actual funding allocations for maintained schools and academies. Academy trusts have flexibilities over how the funding they are allocated in respect of their individual academies is then distributed across academies in their trust. This means that in some cases, an academy could receive a lower per pupil funding amount than the MPPL value. This may reflect, for example, activities that are paid for by the trust centrally, rather than by individual academies.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Avian Influenza

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[100897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to mitigate the impact of avian influenza on farmers; and what steps

she is taking to ensure that farmers whose birds have been killed by the disease are eligible under her Department's compensation scheme.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, on 18 November 2022, [PQ UIN 84855](#).

■ **Agriculture: Methane**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[99798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to (a) mandate and (b) support UK farmers to reduce their methane emissions through better slurry management such as through (i) acidification of slurry stores, or (ii) methane capture and processing.

Mark Spencer:

Investing in proper slurry storage is a critical step livestock farmers need to take to make best use of their organic nutrients and prevent pollution, including reducing methane emissions. Defra has launched a new Slurry Infrastructure grant this autumn to support farmers to reduce these risks. The grant will help livestock farmers already using a slurry system to upgrade their slurry storage, to reach six months storage capacity and to cover grant funded stores with impermeable covers.

We intend to adapt the Slurry Infrastructure grant offer over time to ensure that any public funding for better slurry management supports adoption of innovative treatments such as acidification and circular use of slurry such as methane capture for energy and fuel. Grants were available earlier this year for acidification of slurry stores through the Farming Transformation Fund.

■ **Animal and Plant Health Agency**

Tim Farron:

[\[78666\]](#)

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

Mark Spencer:

The following table sets out the budgets for the Animal and Plant Health Agency from 2015-16 to date. Budgets represent those budgets agreed with HM Treasury and included in Main and Supplementary Estimates. They are net of any external funding received.

	£'000							
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
DEL	3,340	107,696	96,268	99,335	109,969	116,987	205,664	188,326

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.

■ Chemicals

Dan Carden: [\[99967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to publish its UK Chemicals Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:

We have been engaging closely with external partners over the past few months to inform policy development across a range of chemicals issues. This builds on the commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to set out our strategy to tackling chemicals of concern. No publication date for a Chemicals Strategy has yet been set.

■ Controlled Burning

Sir Robert Goodwill: [\[99783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many alleged breaches of the Heather & Grass Burning Regulations 2021 have been reported to Defra, since those regulations came into force.

Sir Robert Goodwill: [\[99784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many breaches of the Heather & Grass Burning Regulations 2021 have required official action, since those regulations came into force.

Trudy Harrison:

To date, we have received 1,584 individual reports of alleged breaches of the Heather and Grass etc Burning (England) Regulations since the regulations came into force on 1 May 2021.

Of these, 1022 could not be assessed because they included insufficient location information.

490 reports have been assessed by Defra and Natural England. Many of these were established to be duplicates or were established to not amount to offences under the regulations.

A total of 72 reports, related to the current burning season, are currently undergoing assessment by Defra and Natural England.

A small number of reports have progressed to formal investigation with one instance resulting in the issue of a formal warning. It would be inappropriate to comment on the ongoing investigations.

■ 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.

■ Dogs: Sheep

Philip Davies:

[\[99786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) reward-only training and (b) e-collar training to deter escaped dogs from attacking sheep.

Mark Spencer:

The statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs includes guidance on how to keep dogs safe and under control, and can be found here: [Code of practice for the welfare of dogs \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Defra published research in 2014 on the use of e-collars which can be found here: [Science Search \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Nitrogen Dioxide

Ruth Jones:

[\[86604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many local authority areas breached legal limits for nitrogen dioxide in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Rebecca Pow:

The Air Quality Standards Regulations set annual mean and one hour limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). In both 2020 and 2021, all local authority areas were compliant with the one hour limit value for NO₂. The number of local authority areas that exceeded the annual mean limit value for NO₂ were:

a) 13 in 2020 (these are 9 in London, 3 in England outside of London and 1 in Wales); and

b) 23 in 2021 (these are 14 in London, 7 in England outside of London and 1 in each of Scotland and Wales).

The increase in exceedances in 2021 is likely due to an increase in road traffic levels following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions during 2021. The national assessment of compliance against air quality limit values for 2022 will be published in September 2023.

In London, responsibility for holding local authorities to account for these exceedances rests with the Mayor. In Scotland and Wales it sits with the respective devolved administrations.

■ **Plants: Environment Protection**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[100933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Countryside Stewardship grant code SB6: Rhododendron Control, how much public funding has been directed towards controlling rhododendron in England since that grant was launched.

Trudy Harrison:

As of 01 December 2022, a total of £3,390,762.20 has been paid out under grant code SB6: Rhododendron Control since the introduction of Countryside Stewardship in 2015.

■ **Sewers: Waste Disposal**

Damien Moore:

[\[99985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that water companies reduce water waste and overflows.

Rebecca Pow:

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

■ **Slurry Infrastructure Grant: Methane**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[99797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the ability to use the Slurry Infrastructure Grant to reduce methane emissions in line with the Global Methane Pledge.

Mark Spencer:

The Slurry Infrastructure grant will reduce pollutants to water and air. In particular the grant requirement to cover the stores with impermeable covers will reduce the key emissions of ammonia, nitrous oxide and methane.

The UK already has a strong record on methane emission reductions, having reduced UK territorial methane emissions by 60% compared to 1990 levels. While global methane emissions peaked in 2020, the UK's methane emissions peaked in 1991 and have decreased substantially since then, due to concerted action across the energy, waste and agriculture sectors.

Water Companies: Fines**Henry Smith:**[\[92161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of investing fines given to water companies in improving waterways.

Rebecca Pow:

On Wednesday 30th November we announced we will be channelling money from water company fines into schemes to improve the environment. The announcement is available on gov.uk at the webpage here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-company-fines-to-be-channelled-into-environmental-improvements>

Under our new plans, money from fines handed out to water companies that pollute our rivers and seas will be re-invested in schemes that benefit our natural environment.

Since 2015, the Environment Agency has concluded 56 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies securing fines of over £141 million.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**Afghanistan: Ethnic Groups****Paul Bristow:**[\[100016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government is taking steps to support the Hazara community in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious and ethnic minorities and we engage with Hazara representatives who provide vital insight on the situation. We are working with international partners to ensure credible monitoring to hold those responsible for human rights abuses to account. On 7 October, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate for another year. His recent report to the Human Rights Council included an assessment

of the situation for Hazara communities and we are working with the international community on how best to respond to his recommendations.

■ Africa: Droughts and Famine

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[102982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) Ethiopia, (b) Kenya, (c) Somalia and (d) South Sudan with the effects of (i) drought and (ii) famine.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is a sizeable humanitarian donor to East Africa. Since 2019 the UK has allocated more than £1 billion towards humanitarian operations, including across Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan, helping to reach tens of millions of people with life-saving aid. Final humanitarian allocations for FY 22/23 are currently being reviewed.

■ Brazil: UN Security Council

Navendu Mishra:

[\[100022\]](#)

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

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Our position is well known. The United Kingdom has long called for the expansion of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. We support the creation of new permanent seats for India, Germany, Japan and Brazil, as well as permanent African representation on the Council. We also support an expansion of the non-permanent category of membership, taking the Security Council's total membership to somewhere in the mid-twenties. With these changes, the Council would be more representative of the world today and, coupled with a renewed commitment to the UN Charter, it would be better able to respond decisively to threats to international peace and security.

■ Canada: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[98687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on an agreement between Canada and the UK modelled on the Trans-Tasman arrangement between Australia and New Zealand.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has no plans to model an agreement on the Trans-Tasman Travel arrangement between Australia and New Zealand.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Accountancy**

John Cryer: [\[99717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, 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.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Details of Government contracts from 2016 above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder. <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

Information on the definitions of consultancy spend can be found on GOV.UK at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987885/Procurement_CAS_Definition_Release_9_v1__2_.pdf

The FCDO's E-sourcing system only goes back to 2016 so we are unable to provide data between 2010/11 and 2015.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Bullying and Harassment**

Layla Moran: [\[102905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many complaints by UK-based civil servants of (a) bullying and (b) harassment were recorded in his Department in each year since 2019.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

YEAR	BULLYING	HARASSMENT (INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT)
2019	11	9
2020	10	6
2021	8	5
2022	5	3

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Disclosure of Information**

Layla Moran: [\[86579\]](#)

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

David Rutley:

The numbers for non-disclosure and other confidentiality agreements are set out in the table below for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development up until the departments merged in September 2020, and for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office since then.

In 2010 and 2011 it was standard practice in DFID to arrange for compromise agreements to be put in place for staff who, by agreement, left the organisation under the Civil Service Compensation Scheme. These agreements included a confidentiality clause as a matter of course.

YEAR	FCO (UNTIL 1 SEPTEMBER 2020)	DFID (UNTIL 1 SEPTEMBER 2020)	FCDO (FROM 2 SEPTEMBER 2020)
2010	Not held	11	
2011	Not held	7	
2012	Not held	Fewer than five	
2013	None	Fewer than five	
2014	None	None	
2015	None	None	
2016	None	None	
2017	None	None	
2018	None	None	
2019	None	None	
2020	None	None	Fewer than five *
2021			None
2022			None

*No financial settlements were involved. It is not possible to identify the proportion of legal costs which related to non-disclosure.

The FCDO follows Government policy which, since 2015 has been clear that confidentiality clauses should not be used to prevent staff from raising or discussing allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Economic Growth**Liam Byrne:** [\[99745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to policy paper entitled Build Back Better: our plan for growth, published March 2021, what projects his Department contributed to as part of that policy initiative; and what public spending has been committed to those projects.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Under the Government's Places for Growth programme (PfG), the FCDO plans to support an additional 500 roles based in Abercrombie House, our joint HQ in East Kilbride. These roles will cover the full range of FCDO's work - corporate, development and diplomatic - at all grades.

Following the Autumn Budget announced by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, FCDO will be launching detailed Business & Country Planning and Workforce Planning exercises in the New Year. This will help to determine the FCDO's future workforce requirements from 2023-24 onwards, taking into account Ministerial priorities, and delivering our FCDO transformation. This process will help to identify what proportion of FCDO workforce budget is to be allocated to this programme.

■ Indo-Pacific Region: Development Aid**Liam Byrne:** [\[99734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether there has been a change in the number of (a) his Department's (i) personnel and (ii) assets and (b) the level of development assistance in the Indo-Pacific region since 16 March 2021.

Liam Byrne: [\[99736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether there has been a change in his Department's (a) departmental expenditure limit and (b) annually managed expenditure spending in the Indo-Pacific region since 16 March 2021.

Liam Byrne: [\[99740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what changes there have been to the level of UK official development assistance in the Indo-Pacific region by each nation in the region and in each year since March 2021.

Liam Byrne: [\[99741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's forecast budget is for development assistance to nations in the Indo-Pacific region broken down by (a) nation and (b) financial year for each of the next five years.

Liam Byrne:

[\[99742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his Department's forecast is of (a) the total FTE and (b) the change in FTE complement for each of his embassies and consulates in the Indo-Pacific region, broken down by (i) embassy and (ii) consulate for each year in the next five-year period.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We have doubled the number of British High Commissions across the Pacific Island Countries over the past three years. The UK now has six High Commissions in the Pacific including: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu. The UK also opened the UK Mission to ASEAN in 2019 to strengthen UK-ASEAN engagement. Since achieving ASEAN Dialogue Partner Status, the UK Mission to ASEAN has expanded with further roles planned by March 2023.

We have increased resourcing in a number of key Missions including Canberra, Jakarta, and Singapore.

In addition, a significant and increasing number of FCDO roles both at Headquarters and across the global network, involve an element of China policy. This shift in focus and resource has been underway for a number of years. The FCDO dedicated an additional £3 million in 2020/21 and a further £3 million in 2022/23 to increase our capability on China, including a significantly expanded China Department and new China-related roles in the overseas network.

Following the Autumn Budget announced by the Prime Minister and Chancellor, FCDO ODA allocations are being worked through and will be published in due course. FCDO will also be launching detailed Business & Country Planning and Workforce Planning exercises in the new year. This will help to determine the FCDO's future workforce requirements from 2023-24 onwards, taking into account Ministerial priorities, and delivering our FCDO transformation.

The actual FCDO Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend has been published in Annex A within the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021-22

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-to-2022>) and 2020-21 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021>).

ODA is measured on a calendar year basis.

Provisional UK ODA figures are published annually in spring, with final figures in autumn. Final data for 2021 was published on 23 November 2022

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>)

■ Iran: Religious Freedom

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[97456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Iranian Government on the treatment of civilians by the Islamic Guidance Patrol.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK raises Iran's violation of human rights at all appropriate opportunities, both directly with the regime and in multilateral fora. One element of this concerns the Islamic Guidance Patrol - the so called "morality police" - which has a history of persecuting women and girls. On 10 October, the UK imposed sanctions against the institution in its entirety and individual sanctions against two members of its senior leadership. Since October, we have also sanctioned a further 29 individuals for their roles in the suppression of protests. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful UN Human Rights Council resolution to establish a formal investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations during the protests.

■ Islamophobia: International Cooperation**Ruth Jones:****[98780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on tackling anti-Muslim hatred.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We remain deeply concerned by violations and abuses of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in many parts of the world, including intolerance and hate speech. The UK is committed to working with our international partners to protect the right to FoRB for all through adherence to FoRB-focussed resolutions which enjoy consensus agreement, including those led by the EU and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, as well as multilateral engagement through the UN, Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In July this year we hosted an international Ministerial conference on FoRB, bringing together over 800 faith and belief leaders and human rights actors, and 100 government delegations to agree action to promote and protect FoRB. Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern with those we believe are not meeting their obligations, and in March this year we led development of an International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance statement (<https://www.state.gov/irfba-statement-on-the-ahmadiyya-muslim-community/>) calling out persecution of Ahmadi Muslims.

■ Japan**Mark Pritchard:****[99788]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to further increase the UK's bilateral relationship with Japan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK-Japan bilateral relationship is a strong and wide-ranging partnership. It is an increasingly deep and broad relationship, encompassing close collaboration in areas from security and defence to science and innovation. Our economic relationship is going from strength to strength following agreement of our bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2020, which we are now seeking to implement in full. In the security and defence space, Japan and the UK have agreed in principle the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) and we continue to work on closer collaboration

on combat air programmes. As fellow members of the G7 and ahead of Japan's G7 Presidency next year, we look forward to continuing to grow the UK-Japan relationship.

■ Japan: Foreign Relations

Catherine West:

[\[102956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to further increase defence, security, and trade partnerships on a bilateral basis with Japan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK-Japan bilateral relationship is a strong and wide-ranging partnership. It is an increasingly deep and broad relationship, encompassing close collaboration in areas from security and defence to science and innovation, supported by regular Ministerial and official visits to and from Japan.

Our economic relationship is going from strength to strength following the agreement of our bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2020, which we are now seeking to implement in full. UK accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) would accelerate trade cooperation even further.

In the security and defence space, Japan and the UK have agreed in principle the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) and we continue to work on closer collaboration on combat air programmes. As fellow members of the G7 and ahead of Japan's G7 Presidency next year, we look forward to continuing to grow the UK-Japan relationship.

■ Joseph Kabuleta

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[99792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the arrest of Joseph Kabuleta in Uganda on 28 November 2022 on (a) freedom of expression, (b) freedom of the press and (c) democratic processes in that country; and whether his Department has taken recent steps to help tackle misinformation about the ebola outbreak in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The British High Commission in Uganda is closely following the arrest of Joseph Kabuleta, President of the National Economic Empowerment Dialogue. Kabuleta was initially detained for allegedly failing to respond to a police summons to provide a statement on allegations of promoting sectarianism. He has since been charged with that offence and is now seeking bail. The UK remains a steadfast advocate for a more open and vibrant civic space that offers freedom of expression for all Ugandans. This is essential to democratic progress and we regularly raise these issues with the Government of Uganda, both privately and publicly. The British High Commission has raised misinformation about the Ebola outbreak with the Government of Uganda and international partners, and has provided £900,000 to

UNICEF to help strengthen engagement with communities on the Ebola response, including by community health workers, traditional healers and local leaders.

■ Pakistan: Floods

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[99799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to support the response to flooding in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has pledged £26.5 million to support the response to the flooding in Pakistan. £5 million of the total £26.5 million amount will go to the DEC appeal as match funding. £11.5 million will support aid agencies to respond to people's immediate needs, including the provision of water, sanitation, shelter, and protecting women and girls. The further £10 million will focus on the health and nutrition implications of the crisis including tackling the rise in water-borne disease. The UK is also working with our international partners and multilateral organisations to advocate for Pakistan's economic recovery and reconstruction.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[99800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide assistance to Pakistan on the lack of clean drinking water after recent flooding in that country.

Leo Docherty:

The UK's humanitarian response to the flooding in Pakistan has prioritised clean water, sanitation and hygiene in response to the high risk of water-borne diseases. This aid is being targeted at the most vulnerable in the hardest hit areas of Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces. Alongside these efforts, we are continuing to monitor access to safe drinking water across the country and are working with the donor community and the Government of Pakistan to assess what further support is needed.

■ Republic of Ireland: Ukraine

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[102811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the European Commission on the comparison made between Ukraine and the Republic of Ireland in the speech by the President of the European Commission to the Irish parliament on 1 December 2022.

Leo Docherty:

The Government has regular conversations with the European Commission at both official and Ministerial level.

■ South Korea: Foreign Relations

Catherine West:

[\[102955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to further increase defence, security, and trade partnerships on a bilateral basis with South Korea.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We have a strong and close relationship with the Republic of Korea. Next year we will celebrate the 140th anniversary of our diplomatic ties. We want ROK to be one of our key partners in the region and support its ambition to be a Global Pivotal State, taking a greater role on the international stage. In June, we agreed a Bilateral Framework for Closer Co-operation to further strengthen our relationship, including in defence, security and trade, as set out in a Joint Statement following the Foreign Secretary's Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Park Jin in September. Among other things, we are committed to: increasing the interoperability of our defence forces through increased exercises, negotiating a Maritime Partnership and renegotiating our Free Trade Agreement.

■ Ukraine: Meat

Alicia Kearns:

[\[98921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will supply generators to Ukraine's meat industry to ensure continued supplies of meat despite damage to the Ukrainian energy grid.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor to Ukraine, providing £220 million in humanitarian assistance including more than 850 mobile generators. Our latest £16 million package will help provide the most vulnerable with shelter, water and energy during winter. The UK has committed £10 million to the Energy Community's Ukraine Support Fund, to help Ukraine's efforts to repair infrastructure and reconnect households and key facilities to electricity and gas supply. The Prime Minister recently announced £4 million for the International Organisation for Migration in Ukraine. This new support includes the provision of generators for households and collective centres.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Ambulance Services: Strikes

Mark Pritchard:

[\[99790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to help mitigate the potential impact of planned industrial action by ambulance workers on acute health services in (a) Shropshire and (b) Telford and Wrekin.

Will Quince:

NHS England are leading national discussions to agree principles for determining derogations locally, including Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. Employers and trade unions should discuss local derogations, which will identify which services are exempt from strike action in order to protect patient safety.

Exercise 'Arctic Willow', a multi-day exercise for integrated care boards (ICBs) working with trusts, is currently taking place. This will test the system to ensure services can respond to multiple, concurrent events. Data from this exercise will be coordinated through ICBs and submitted to NHS England. Findings will be complete by mid-December.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients**Munira Wilson:**[\[102986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of patients detained under the Mental Health Act spend (a) up to 24, (b) 25-48, (c) 49-72 and (d) over 72 hours on hospital triage wards, including A&E, before being transferred to a specialist mental health ward.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Coronavirus: Immunosuppression**Daisy Cooper:**[\[97699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) public health and (b) clinical advice his Department is providing to immunocompromised patients who (i) do not demonstrate an antibody response to vaccines for covid-19 and (ii) who are medically unable to take available therapies for that virus.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: We have introduced enhanced protections which may benefit the small number of people whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 despite vaccination, which includes free testing and public health guidance on managing this risk. Antiviral treatments are also available, which can be accessed in the community and in hospital. While a small minority may not be able to receive an antiviral, as of 28 November 2022 Sotrovimab can be prescribed in exceptional circumstances where other treatments have been deemed unsuitable.

We are also exploring options for an antibody testing study this winter to improve the understanding of risks to this patient cohort. The scope of this study is currently being developed and further information will be available in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[102789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2022 to Question 96554 on Cardiovascular Diseases, what assessment he has made of the impact of post-vaccination surveillance on the treatment of patients with post-vaccination syndrome resulting from covid-19 vaccines; and in which specialist facilities such patients can be treated.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made as post-vaccination syndrome is not a defined medical condition. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency continually monitors vaccine safety and will communicate with the public to minimise any risks should a new safety concern be identified.

In the very rare event where an individual may have suffered a severe adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, care would normally be managed by local National Health Service specialist services and with national specialist advice. This is in line with the support provided to those who have suffered disease or disability as a result of other causes.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[90728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 82160 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, for what reason providing a list of medical conditions that have been accepted or rejected would require the disclosure of personal information; and if he will list the medical conditions without disclosing information that could identify any person with such a condition.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: The Department is unable to provide the information requested where the number of claimants is fewer than five as there is a risk that claimants could be identified using a combination of information which may be in the public domain or reasonably available.

The following table provides a list of medical conditions for which there have been five or more COVID-19 vaccine related claimants to minimise the risk of any persons being identified.

ACCEPTED

REJECTED

Vaccine-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis/cerebral venous sinus thrombosis

Myocarditis/pericarditis

Myocardial infarction

Pulmonary embolus

Stroke/cerebrovascular accident

Due to the complexity of cases, it is possible one individual with a certain condition might be accepted, whilst another might be rejected.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Accountancy

John Cryer:

[99715]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 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.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 7 December 2022]: Details for all Government contracts above £10,000 post 2016 are published on Contracts Finder:
<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

Information on the value and nature of individual contracts pre 2016 is on archived database systems and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Historic expenditure above £25,000 against individual suppliers since 2010 is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/spending-over-25-000--2#2010-to-2018>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Electronic Messaging

Angela Rayner:

[96615]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by the Information Commissioner's Office entitled Behind the screens: maintaining government transparency and data security in the age of messaging apps, published on 11 July 2022, whether his Department has taken recent steps to implement the recommendation to review the use of private correspondence channels.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 30 November 2022]: The Department recently updated the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on progress. We are implementing initiatives to enhance data governance and protection arrangements and we will provide further information to the ICO in January 2023.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Incentives

Emily Thornberry:

[97502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the value of non-cash vouchers awarded to staff working for his core Department as performance-related bonuses was in financial years (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19, (c) 2019-20, (d) 2020-21 and (e) 2021-22.

Will Quince:

We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure**Dame Caroline Dinéage:** [\[98730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increased inflation on (a) his Department's budget and (b) patient care in the NHS.

Will Quince:

The Government is investing an additional £3.3 billion in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to respond to pressures on the National Health Service and improve emergency, elective and primary care. The NHS resource budget in England will increase to £160.4 billion in 2023/24 and £165.9 billion in 2024/25.

■ Draft Mental Health Bill**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[99937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the additional funding needed to implement the measures in the draft Mental Health Bill.

Maria Caulfield:

The impact assessment accompanying the draft Mental Health Bill assesses the costs associated with implementation of its provisions. This assessment will be refined and updated as the draft Bill progresses.

■ Fertility: HIV Infection**Taiwo Owatemi:** [\[103026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department of the potential merits of making changes to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act to allow greater access to fertility treatment for people with HIV.

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 its position on gamete donors with HIV. The Department will consider any advice that may result from this review.

■ Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013**Stella Creasy:** [\[102910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he has plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke and (c) retain the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

Neil O'Brien:

Through the Retained EU Law (Reform and Revocation) Bill, the Government is considering which retained European Union legislation should be repealed, reformed or preserved. Any such reforms will not alter the United Kingdom's high standards.

The Government will continue to work with a range of organisations and stakeholders to ensure that patient safety and public health are maintained.

The independent Food Standards Agency, working with Food Standards Scotland, is participating in the review of all retained EU law within its responsibilities. Consumer safety or the ability of business to trade during this review will not be compromised.

■ **Gynaecology: Waiting Lists**

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[104169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of women waiting to access essential gynaecological care.

Feryal Clark: [\[104351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for endometriosis-related surgery.

Maria Caulfield:

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 in gynaecological services. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. This funding aims to deliver the equivalent of approximately nine million additional checks and procedures and 30% further elective activity by 2024/25 than pre-pandemic levels. A proportion of this funding will be invested in workforce capacity and training and we have committed to invest £5.9 billion for new beds, equipment and technology.

Community diagnostic centres and surgical hubs will deliver additional activity, including gynaecological services. The Getting it Right First Time high-volume low-complexity programme aims to accelerate access to care and reduce waiting times, including endometriosis related surgery.

■ **Health Professions: Apprentices**

Rachael Maskell: [\[99903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of apprenticeships for health professions.

Will Quince:

Working with Health Education England, we have developed 97 apprentice standards across health and science. National Health Service apprenticeships offer routes into more than 350 NHS careers such as medicine, nursing and a number of allied health professions.

■ Hospitals: Yorkshire and the Humber

Naz Shah: [\[101006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) build new and (b) improve existing hospitals in Yorkshire.

Naz Shah: [\[101008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the number of new hospitals built in Yorkshire under the New Hospitals Programme.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: The Government has committed to build 40 new hospitals by 2030. In Yorkshire, we are working with Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in the development of its scheme. The new hospital for Leeds will enhance treatment and care and replace outdated infrastructure with innovative facilities and technology. We have received 128 expressions of interest for the next cohort of eight new hospitals which are currently being assessed.

Trusts in Yorkshire have benefitted from programmes such as the Targeted Investment Fund for estates and digital initiatives, the Critical Infrastructure Risk Fund to eradicate backlog maintenance, upgrades to accident and emergency departments and hospitals.

■ Human Papillomavirus

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[102755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to address the stigmatisation of HPV vaccination and screening in marginalised communities.

Maria Caulfield:

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and screening programmes are universal offers and information is available in a range of languages to target specific populations, including those in marginalised communities. The HPV immunisation programme has reduced health inequalities in local authority areas through its school-based delivery method. Due to high uptake of the vaccine since 2008 and the protection it provides, the prevalence of specific types of HPV has reduced.

■ Infant Mortality and Miscarriage: Stockport

Navendu Mishra: [\[93699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve provision of bereavement support in Stockport constituency for parents and families following miscarriage or baby loss.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: In 2022/23, NHS England has provided £2.26 million to expand the number of staff trained in bereavement care and is supporting the deployment of a National Bereavement Care Pathway to reduce the variation in the quality of bereavement care, including in Stockport.

In addition, we aim to improve the access to and quality of perinatal mental health care for mothers and their partners through expanding mental health hubs and the introduction of pregnancy loss certificates.

■ Junior Doctors: Pay**Afzal Khan:**[\[102980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of restoring the pay of junior doctors to a level equivalent in real terms to the pay they received in 2008.

Will Quince:

Junior Doctors are in a pre-existing multi-year pay and contract reform deal, which ends in March 2023. The upcoming pay round is the appropriate time to discuss pay after the multi-year deal ends.

Outside of multi-year agreements, the independent pay review body (PRB) process is the established mechanism for developing pay recommendations. PRBs are made up of industry experts who carefully consider evidence submitted to them from a range of stakeholders, including government and trade unions. They base their recommendations on several factors including the economic context, cost of living, recruitment and retention, morale, and motivation of NHS staff.

■ Lynfield Mount Hospital**Naz Shah:**[\[101005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the proposal submitted by Lynfield Mount Hospital for the New Hospitals Programme.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: In 2021, we received an expression of interest from the Lynfield Mount Hospital to be considered in the next cohort of new hospitals. This is being assessed amongst 128 expressions received from trusts.

■ Maternity Services: Staff**Jim Shannon:**[\[99841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the age profile of maternity support workers in the NHS.

Will Quince:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England. These include staff working in hospital trusts and integrated care systems but excludes staff working for other providers such as in primary care, general practice or social care. The following table shows the number of maternity support staff, headcount, in National Health Service hospitals and commissioning bodies in England, as of August 2022 by age group.

UNDER 25 YEARS OLD	25 TO 34 YEARS OLD	35 TO 44 YEARS OLD	45 TO 54 YEARS OLD	55 TO 64 YEARS OLD	65 YEARS OLD AND OVER
587	2,141	2,349	2,177	2,001	292

Source: NHS Digital Workforce Statistics

Note:

Maternity support staff have been defined as all support staff working in maternity services and neonatal nursing care settings. This includes nursing associates, nursery nurses, nursing assistants/auxiliaries, healthcare assistants and support workers.

Jim Shannon:[\[99842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS maternity support workers there were in each region of England in the most recent period for which data is available.

Will Quince:

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) maternity support staff working in National Health Service hospitals and commissioning bodies in each region in England, as of August 2022.

REGION	NUMBER OF FTE MATERNITY SUPPORT STAFF
East of England	865
London	1,271
Midlands	1,488
North East and Yorkshire	1,135
North West	967
South East	1,106
South West	713

Source: NHS Digital Workforce Statistics

Note:

Maternity support staff have been defined as all support staff working in maternity services and neonatal nursing care settings. This includes nursing associates, nursery nurses, nursing assistants/auxiliaries, healthcare assistants and support workers.

■ Mental Health Services: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences

David Linden:

[\[99951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the availability of mental health services for women and girls who experience domestic and sexual violence.

Maria Caulfield:

We continue to work with colleagues across government on this issue. The NHS Long Term Plan commits an additional £2.3 billion a year for mental health services in England by 2023/24 to allow a further two million people, including victims of domestic and sexual violence, to access National Health Service-funded mental health support.

NHS England commissions 48 sexual assault referral centres (SARCs), which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse. The Department is working with NHS England to support the integration of SARC services within the local sexual assault and abuse care pathway to ensure that the needs of survivors of sexual exploitation are addressed. We are also working with the Home Office, which is investing up to £7.5 million over three years to implement domestic abuse interventions in healthcare settings in England.

■ Mental Health Services: East of England

Tom Hunt:

[\[87996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) quality and (b) availability of mental health services in the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with the NHS England, the Care Quality Commission and local partners to ensure high quality patient outcomes at the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. Local partners are assessing how mental health services may operate in future, with options being developed for improving service delivery.

Ministers will be hosting a meeting with Hon. Members from across Norfolk and Suffolk and NHS system partners on 12 December to discuss the improvement work that is being taken to improve services at the Trust.

■ Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018

Steve Reed:

[\[97620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any sections of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 are not yet in force.

Maria Caulfield:

Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Act are yet to be commenced. We are working with NHS England, NHS Digital, the Care Quality Commission and other partners to determine how these sections can be commenced as soon as possible, while ensuring mental health trusts are prepared and able to meet the requirements of the Act.

It is already mandatory for National Health Service (NHS) organisations or trusts and independent hospitals (where they are providing NHS funded care), to submit data on the use of force to the NHS Digital Mental Health Services Data Set. Therefore, many of the data fields required under Section 6 and 7 are already being recorded and, where necessary, reported by Mental Health Units.

■ NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Daisy Cooper:

[\[99997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to take steps to extend the NHS and Social Care Life Assurance Scheme 2020 to include support for (a) NHS and (b) social care staff who have (i) a long-term disability due to a covid-19 infection and (ii) Long Covid.

Will Quince:

The NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme provided financial security to the families of frontline National Health Service and social care staff who died from COVID-19 contracted in the course of performing their duties. While the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme closed to new claims on 31 March 2022, it will remain open until 31 March 2023 to allow for outstanding claims which occurred whilst the Scheme was open. Financial and welfare support is available to support those affected by chronic healthcare conditions and who are unable to work.

■ NHS: ICT

Julie Elliott:

[\[99835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will have the results of the Digital Health Technology Standards Audit.

Julie Elliott:

[\[99836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the results of the Digital Health Technology Standards Audit.

Will Quince:

The deadline for the return of the Audit's templates to NHS England is 16 December 2022. Following analysis of the results, National Health Service organisations which have confirmed technologies not assessed against the Digital Technology Assessment Criteria (DTAC) or have not undertaken DCB:0160 documentation, will be required to submit remedial action plans. NHS England intends to share these actions plans with the Department with a summary of the response rate and quality of returns. While NHS England has no plans to publish the results of the Audit, it will publish a directory of products which meet DTAC standards.

Julie Elliott:[\[99837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether all NHS organisations were required to reach out to all of their providers of digital services as part of the Digital Health Technology Standards Audit.

Will Quince:

The Digital Health Technology Standards Audit did not require National Health Service organisations to contact providers of digital services. The Audit requests information from NHS secondary care organisations on the digital health technologies deployed within the organisation, whether a DCB:0160 clinical safety case to deploy the technology was completed, whether the organisation assessed the technologies against all or any part of the Digital Technology Assessment Criteria and optionally, contract length and value. We would expect this information to be held by the organisations.

■ NHS: Long Covid**Daisy Cooper:**[\[99996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS workers were on sick leave due to Long Covid as of 29 November 2022; and how many and what proportion of those workers have been absent for more than (a) six and (b) 12 months.

Will Quince:

This information is not held in the format requested.

■ NHS: Sign Language**Seema Malhotra:**[\[100975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many British Sign Language interpreters were employed by the NHS in each of the last 12 years.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ NHS: Staff**Caroline Lucas:**[\[95818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to hold discussions with representatives of (a) Parkinson's UK and (b) other patient organisations on the forthcoming NHS workforce plan; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

We have commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan is currently in development and NHS England is engaging with a range of stakeholders. The Department has no further plans to consult stakeholders during this phase of the plan's development.

We have committed to publish the workforce plan next year which will include independently verified forecasts for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals required in future years, taking into account improvements in retention and productivity.

■ Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust: Standards**Chloe Smith:**[\[86445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the (a) performance of and (b) the patient experience at the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust.

Maria Caulfield:

We are working with the National Health Service, the Care Quality Commission and local partners to ensure high quality patient outcomes at the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. The local system has been assessing how mental health delivery might operate in future and how services should be configured, with options for improving service delivery.

I will be hosting a meeting with Norfolk and Suffolk MPs and National Health Service system partners on 12th December to discuss the improvement work that they have been taking to improve services at the Trust.

■ Nurses: Apprentices**Rachael Maskell:**[\[99904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the level of take up is of nursing apprenticeships; and what steps he is taking to encourage more people to take up nursing through that route.

Will Quince:

The deployment of the Registered Nursing Degree Apprenticeships (RNDA) saw 2,243 starts in 2020/21 academic year and 3,416 starts in the 2021/22 academic year.

Up to £172 million of additional funding has been made available to employers as part of the Nurse 50K manifesto commitment to support the growth of RNDAs.

The National Health Service has also launched the fifth consecutive national recruitment campaign 'We are the NHS' in October 2022, aiming to inspire target audiences to undertake a career in nursing.

■ Nurses: Pensions

Karin Smyth: [\[99883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to reduce the number of nurses leaving the NHS pension scheme.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: Approximately 88% of National Health Service nurses and health visitors are members of the NHS Pension Scheme. NHS England's retention programme will allow employers to make flexible employment offers to staff and promote the value of the Pension Scheme. NHS England is delivering seminars on the Scheme and how flexible retirement options can encourage staff to stay or retire and return to the NHS.

■ Pharmacy: Staff

Daisy Cooper: [\[99999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether pharmacists and the pharmacy workforce will be considered as part of the upcoming NHS workforce plan.

Will Quince:

The pharmacy workforce will be considered in the development of the plan.

■ PPE Medpro: Contracts

Angela Rayner: [\[97547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department made an assessment of the compatibility of PPE Medpro Ltd's bid to provide PPE with Regulation 57 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: A due diligence assessment was conducted on PPE Medpro using company and financial information. No grounds for mandatory exclusion under Regulation 57 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 were found.

Angela Rayner: [\[97548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether provisions were included in public contracts with PPE Medpro Ltd in accordance with Regulation 73 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 enabling the contracting authority to terminate the contract where the contract should have been excluded from the procurement procedure.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The contract entered into with PPE Medpro Ltd for the supply of personal protective equipment contains termination clauses for a material breach and 'convenience'. The 'convenience' clause is a break clause which allows the Department to terminate the contract for any reason.

■ Pregabalin: Misuse**Peter Gibson:**[\[99992\]](#)

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

Will Quince:

No specific guidance has been issued. Pregabalin is a controlled substance and the British National Formulary states that healthcare professionals should evaluate patients for a history of drug misuse before prescribing pregabalin and observe patients for the development of signs of misuse and dependence.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[101020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) include asthma in the medical exemptions list for NHS prescription charges, (b) backdate all prescription prepayment certificates to 12 months and (c) reduce all prescriptions costs.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no current plans to do so. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge and there are a range of exemptions in place, which those with asthma may be eligible for and be in receipt of free prescriptions.

The cost of prescriptions can be limited by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate, which can be paid for in instalments, to receive all required medicines for just over £2 a week. Additionally, the NHS Low Income Scheme can also assist with health costs on an income-related basis. In 2022/23, prescription charges have been frozen for the single prescription charge and the prescription pre-payment certificate.

Daisy Cooper:[\[95938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the affordability of prescriptions for patients on low incomes who do not qualify for free prescriptions.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. Approximately 89% of prescription items are currently dispensed free of charge and there are a range of exemptions from prescription charges. To support those who do not qualify for an exemption from prescription charges, the cost of prescriptions can be limited by

purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate, which can be paid for in instalments. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week. Additionally, people on a low income who do not qualify for an exemption from prescription charges can also seek help under the NHS Low Income Scheme, which provides help with health costs on an income-related basis.

■ **Psychiatric Hospitals: Construction**

Naz Shah: [\[101004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the proportion of the budget for the New Hospitals Programme that has been spent on mental health hospitals.

Naz Shah: [\[101007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to increase the proportion of mental health schemes funded as part of the New Hospital Programme.

Naz Shah: [\[101009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health hospitals.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 December 2022]: The Government has committed to build 40 new hospitals by 2030. The announced schemes include new mental health hospitals.

There are currently two mental health hospitals in the New Hospital Programme. An updated secure facility at Northgate Hospital in Morpeth, has received £43.09 million and a specialist facility in the new hospital scheme at St Ann's, Dorset has received £2.37 million to date. In addition, the Department is also investing in the eradication of mental health dormitories to replace with single en-suite rooms. We have also provided £150 million to the National Health Service to improve mental health facilities connected to accident and emergency and enhance patient safety in mental health units.

■ **Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Children**

Daisy Cooper: [\[97701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the recommendations of NHS England's Palivizumab National Expert Group on the eligibility of a sub-group of children with spinal muscular atrophy to receive a palivizumab vaccination.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 1 December 2022]: The Palivizumab National Expert Group considered the eligibility of a specific group of children with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) to receive a palivizumab vaccination. While the Expert Group was supportive in principle of adding SMA type 1 patients to those currently eligible, it concluded that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) should consider the

context of other similar types of neurological conditions and other relevant childhood conditions. The JCVI's next respiratory syncytial virus subcommittee is expected to take place in early 2023.

■ Terminal Illnesses: Children

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[101691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November to Question 96552, if he will place a copy of the relevant chemical guidance in the Library.

Maria Caulfield:

The General Medical Council's guidance, 'Guidance: Treatment and care towards the end of life' is available at the following link:

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/treatment-and-care-towards-the-end-of-life/guidance>

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

Jim Shannon:

[\[99838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the primary factors driving growth in measured spend covered by the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access in each of the last three years.

Jim Shannon:

[\[99839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many member companies of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access have reported profits in excess of the margin of tolerance in each of the past five years.

Will Quince:

As part of the consultation process undertaken in 2020 and 2022, we updated the Branded medicines: statutory scheme. Impact assessments were conducted to understand the drivers of changes to measured sales in the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS).

The 2020 and 2022 assessments are available at the following links:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/871361/final-impact-assessment-statutory-scheme-2020.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1079733/Statutory_Scheme_impact_assessment_medicine_pricing_v3.0_FINALdated_May_2022.pdf

Under the rules of VPAS, there is no requirement for regular assessment of whether scheme members' profits exceed the margin of tolerance. Under the 2014 Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme where such a requirement was in place, no companies were found to have exceeded the margin of tolerance in 2017 or 2018.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Finance**

Yvette Cooper: [\[101694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been in receipt of asylum support for more than one year in each of the last five calendar years.

Yvette Cooper: [\[101695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are projected to be in receipt of asylum support for more than one year in financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24, and (c) 2024-25.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum seekers in receipt of support in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. The latest publication (November 2022) can be found here [Immigration and protection data: Q3 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) under the document [Asylum seekers in receipt of support \(opens in a new tab\)](#) of the workbooks. Data are published on a quarterly basis. The latest information was published 24 November 2022.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates the number of asylum seekers accommodated in specific types of accommodation, the duration of their receipt of support or the number at specific stages of the asylum process. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the code of practice for statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

■ Asylum: Offshoring

Paul Bristow: [\[100015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consideration has been given to using (a) Ascension Island and (b) the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia for the offshore processing of asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

While individuals are endangering lives making perilous journeys, every possible option must be considered to reduce the draw of the UK.

We are in constant dialogue with a range of partners about how we can work together. We will not get drawn into speculation on potential options for offshoring of asylum processing or other outsourcing arrangements.

■ British Overseas Territories: Immigration Controls

Andrew Rosindell:

[97455]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many nationals of British Overseas Territories have been refused entry to the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes numbers of people refused entry at UK ports, who subsequently departed (“port returns”) in the quarterly [Immigration Statistics release](#). The latest data are to the end of June 2022.

A breakdown of port returns by nationality for different periods is given in table Ret_D01 of the accompanying [detailed returns data tables](#). Please note that most of the British Overseas Territories nationalities have been grouped into one nationality group “British Overseas Citizens”. Others which appear more commonly in the figures, such as Bermuda, are shown separately.

Port returns include people who are refused entry and are returned, so are therefore not a count of all people refused entry.

Further information about how to use this data is available in the ‘[About the statistics](#)’ section and the [user guide](#).

■ Children: Detainees

Janet Daby:

[101059]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the average time between a child being detained in police custody and an Appropriate Adult 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.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[102965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the funding for fire and rescue authorities to enable them to operate safely.

Chris Philp:

Fire and rescue services have the resources they need to do their important work.

In 2022/23, overall, fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.5 billion. Standalone fire and rescue authorities will see an increase in core spending power of 6.2 per cent in cash terms compared to 2021/22.

It is a matter for individual Chief Fire Officers to make operational decisions including the allocation of resources and the provision of regular fire safety training for firefighters and staff at their respective authorities.

■ Gender Based Violence

David Linden:

[\[99948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made with Cabinet colleagues of trends in the level of violence against women and girls in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Violence Against Women and Girls crimes are often hidden and can go unreported to the police.

This means that police recorded crime data do not provide a reliable measure of trends in levels of Violence Against Women and Girls. Recently, levels of reporting have gone up. This may in part be due to improvements in police recording practices,

but also simply because more victims and survivors are coming forward. We want to see these increase so that more victims and survivors can be supported, and so more perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales provides a more reliable measure of prevalence and covers crimes that may not have been reported to the police. In the year to March 2022,

- 5.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022.
- 2.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 were victims of sexual assault
- 0.4% of adults aged 16 to 59 had experienced rape, including attempts.
- 4.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 had experienced stalking,

There were no significant change compared with the year ending March 2020, the last period for which data were published.

For domestic abuse, rape and stalking, longer-term trends have also remained relatively stable. Whereas, sexual offences have seen fluctuations with no clear trends.

■ Home Office: Chief Scientific Advisers

Greg Clark:

[\[100927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 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.

Chris Philp:

The Home 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.

■ Home Office: Staff

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[99873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of staff currently working as asylum decision makers are (a) permanently employed by her department as asylum decision makers, (b) on secondment from other roles within the Home Office, (c) on secondment from other government departments and (d) on secondment from private sector employers.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[99874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of staff currently working as asylum decision makers are agency staff; and what was the total cost to her Department of employing agency staff as asylum decision makers in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office currently employs c.1276 Decision Makers.

Of staff currently working as asylum Decision Makers.

We do not have any agency staff working as asylum decision makers therefore there is no cost attributed for employing such staff.

Metropolitan Police: Finance

Helen Hayes: [\[102925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) general and (b) specific funding the Government has allocated to the Metropolitan Police Service in each year since 2010.

Helen Hayes: [\[102926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to ensure that allocation of the National and International Capital Cities Grant to the Metropolitan Police Service is sufficient to meet the needs of policing in London.

Helen Hayes: [\[102927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the allocation of the National and International Capital Cities Grant to the Metropolitan Police has been adjusted for inflation.

Chris Philp:

In 2022-23 the Metropolitan Police Service will receive up to £3.24bn of funding. This is an increase of up to £169m when compared to 2021-22. In addition, the MPS receives funding for a number of other functions including as the lead for counter-terrorism, around £47m of funding relating to crime reduction programmes, and specific funding through the Police Special Grant.

The discretionary National and International Capital City (NICC) Grant, which is included in these figures totals £185.3m, unchanged from 2021-22.

Funding since 2010 cannot be directly compared as elements have changed or been amalgamated over time.

Migrants: Detainees

Layla Moran: [\[102961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress she has made in implementing Recommendation 63 of the Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons by Stephen Shaw on investigating the development of alternatives to detention.

Robert Jenrick:

In response to Stephen Shaw's 2016 Review and follow-up report of 2018, and after working closely with UNHCR, the UK government announced the Community Engagement Pilot (CEP) Series.

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 and 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.

■ Refugees: Russia

Neil Coyle:

[100998]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that Russian nationals seeking to avoid conscription can enter the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK Government still operates visa routes for Russian citizens to come to the UK for a variety of reasons, such as to work, study or join/visit family members. Details about the routes, necessary criteria to satisfy, and how to apply are available on GOV.UK at: <http://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa>.

The Home Secretary has powers in the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 to impose visa penalties on a country where the government of that country: gives, or is likely to give, rise to a threat to international peace and security; results, or is likely to result, in armed conflict; or gives, or is likely to give, rise to a breach of international humanitarian law.

These powers have not been used against Russia to date but they are kept under constant review as part of the UK Government's approach to the war in Ukraine.

■ Visas: Overseas Students

Matt Western:

[99944]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2022 to Question 90860 on Visas: Overseas Students, whether her Department holds data it will not publish on the number of recipients of international student visas that are accompanied by five or six dependents for the 2022-23 financial year.

Robert Jenrick:

As part of the visa application process the Home Office records the details of the sponsored migrant a dependant is travelling with or joining.

The Home Office does not routinely publish data on the number of recipients of international student visas who are accompanied by dependants.

Information on our immigration routes is available as part of our transparency data and can be found at: Visas and Citizenship data: Q2 2022.

■ Wind Power: Migrant Workers

Kenny MacAskill: [\[102998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2022 to Question 98935 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, whether her Department had received representations from employers seeking to extend the concession before making a decision to grant that extension.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[102999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2022 to Question 98935 on Wind Power: Migrant Workers, which states that employers should first seek to recruit from the resident labour market, whether her Department (a) carries out checks on employers and (b) seeks assurances from employers that UK labour will be used before seeking to fill posts through immigration under the concession.

Robert Jenrick:

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

The Home Office is not responsible for evaluating the labour market or governing how private companies recruit their workers.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Indo-Pacific Region

Liam Byrne: [\[99743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will set out her Department's forecast of (a) its total FTE and (b) the change in its FTE complement for each of the UK's embassies and consulates in the Indo-Pacific region, broken down by (i) embassy and (ii) consulate for each year in the next five-year period.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is forecasting to have the following Full Time Equivalent (FTE) numbers on 31 March 2023, these figures are the FTE caps in place because of last year's business planning and the Spending Review (SR) settlement for the regions requested. The caps are applied to the entire region.

DIT has commenced its annual business planning round which will set resource plans for 2023-24 and provide indicative plans for 2024-25 and 2025-26 only, therefore we are unable to provide five year forecasts and breakdowns.

	FTE 23/24
Asia Pacific	235
S Asia	119
China Hong Kong	188

■ **Drugs: India**

Caroline Lucas: [\[92159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of Britain's trade negotiations with India on the ability to manufacture generic medicines for the NHS.

Greg Hands:

I am clear that I will never agree any provisions that would increase the cost of medicines for our National Health Service. Britain's trade negotiations with India will not impact on the UK's access to affordable medicines.

■ **Trade Agreements: India**

Patrick Grady: [\[98810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of making the terms of any draft UK-India free-trade deal subject to a vote by the House of Commons.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 2 December 2022]: The Government is committed to ensuring that Parliament can effectively scrutinise the UK's trade deals. It is the Government's view that to give Parliament binding votes over international agreements would fundamentally change the UK's constitutional settlement and undermine the Government's flexibility to negotiate deals that best serve the interests of UK businesses, consumers and communities.

The India trade agreement will be subject to pre-ratification scrutiny through the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act. Furthermore, any legislative changes required to give effect to the agreement will also be scrutinised and passed by Parliament in the usual way.

JUSTICE

■ **Child Contact Centres: Finance**

Louise Haigh: [\[101013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to announce the funding arrangements for this year's grants for child contact centres.

Mike Freer:

The Government values the work of child contact centres and acknowledges the important role they play in providing neutral places for contact between children and their family members.

The arrangements for this small value grant funding are changing this year. The Ministry of Justice is appointing the National Association of Child Contact Centres (NACCC) as the administrators of the grant for this financial year. We are working with NACCC to formalise this arrangement and information will be communicated to contact centres soon.

County Courts: Judgements**Alex Cunningham:****[100963]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of (a) the number of judgments on the Register of Judgments, Orders and Fines for which payment in full had been received and (b) making it mandatory for the register to be updated when payment in full is received.

Mike Freer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

If a county court judgment is paid after one month, defendants can get the record of the judgment marked as satisfied in the Register of Judgments, Orders and Fines, by providing the court with proof of payment from the person or business that they owed money to. Guidance on this process is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/county-court-judgments-ccj-for-debt/ccjs-and-your-credit-rating>.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service: ICT**Steve Reed:****[100989]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Official Report, column 133, on 22 November 2022, on the Common Platform, whether any prisoner case files have been misplaced.

Mike Freer:

There is no evidence to suggest that prisoner information has been misplaced as a result of Common Platform. All case data is held securely on Common Platform, and processes and safeguards are in place to ensure cases are not lost.

Steve Reed:**[97602]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Justice before the Justice Select Committee on 1 March 2022, HC 869, Q168, what the cost to the public purse has been of changes to the Common Platform requested by the Crown Prosecution Service since its introduction.

Mike Freer:

HMCTS are developing with CPS a “common platform” as a case management system in the criminal courts for use by both organisations. This is being delivered using an agile methodology, developing and testing functionality incrementally, within the wider HMCTS Reform programme.

The HMCTS 2020-21 annual accounts included an £18.35 million impairment of common platform assets in relation to elements of the functionality designed for use by the CPS that are not re-usable. The write-off of costs incurred was a result of various causes. The initial pilot tested the pre-charge functionality for CPS, which included building interfaces to link back into legacy systems. After a successful pilot, the programme reviewed the delivery approach and concluded that greater certainty was needed of CPS requirements prior to development, including the design for Digital Case File (a joint CPS and Police initiative), and that all the CPS functionality should be launched together, to reduce the complexity of interaction with the existing systems. This meant that elements of functionality previously developed were no longer required. These should not be characterised as “changes requested by the Crown Prosecution Service”, but rather as joint decisions in the evolution of the programme.

The HMCTS 2021-22 annual accounts included a £4.2 million impairment of common platform assets. This arose from the decision by the Crime Programme Board (which includes membership from across the criminal justice system, including HMCTS and CPS), which was ministerially endorsed, that CPS will retain their current case management system and interface into common platform, in order to best deliver the benefits of the Reform programme, and would not decommission their case management system as was originally intended. This required a write-off of costs incurred to implement CPS case management on the common platform, which no longer related to a useable asset. However, this reduced risks for both HMCTS and CPS following the pandemic, with the overall programme implementation costs reducing as a result of this decision, by approximately £8 million, as the cost of developing interfaces was lower than that of the originally-planned solution.

■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Sick Leave**Steve Reed:**[\[99861\]](#)

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

Mike Freer:

Number of HM Courts and Tribunal Service payroll staff(1) who recorded sick leave for 'Mental Health' sick reasons(2) - for 12 months to March 2020, 2021 and 2022

	2020	2020 PERCENTAGE OF WORKFORCE	2021	2021 PERCENTAGE OF WORKFORCE	2022	2022 PERCENTAGE OF WORKFORCE
Anxiety and Depression	556	3.5%	597	3.6%	689	4.2%
Stress	576	3.6%	455	2.7%	513	3.2%
Mental Health - Other	192	1.2%	136	0.8%	226	1.4%

Notes and caveats:

1. Each member of staff is only recorded once per sick reason - even if they took more than one period of absence for the selected reason. A person may appear in more than one sick reason category.
2. Absences are categorised according to International Classification of Diseases, which is an approach used across the civil service.
3. Data covers employees in HM Courts and Tribunal Service.
4. HMCTS payroll staff headcount for 31st March 2020, 2021 and 2022

MAR-20	15,832
Mar-21	16,659
Mar-22	16,255

■ Independent Sexual Violence Advisers

David Linden:

[\[99958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time equivalent independent (a) domestic and (b) sexual violence advisers have been funded by his Department in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice has committed to ringfenced funding to increase the number of Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors (ISVAs/IDVAs) by 300 to over 1000 by 2024/25 - a 43% increase on the number of ISVAs and IDVAs over the next three years. This builds on the funding provided in 20/21 and 21/22 to recruit c700 ISVA and IDVA posts. We are distributing this ringfenced funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to recruit ISVAs and IDVAs in their local areas. Recruitment for the additional 300 posts commenced in May 2022, and we are

currently working closely with PCCs to track progress of this recruitment. In addition to this funding, PCCs also have discretion to use core victim support grant funding for additional ISVAs and IDVAs, based on their assessment of local need.

The MoJ has information on ISVAs and IDVAs funded from 20/21, which is when the specific ringfenced funding was introduced.

In addition, the Department has committed to supporting ISVAs and IDVAs through measures published in the draft Victims Bill. The Bill will introduce a definition of IDVA and ISVA roles, a power for the Secretary of State to issue statutory guidance on these roles, and a duty on agencies and those who work with victims to have due regard to the guidance.

■ Judiciary: Ethnic Groups

Afzal Khan:

[102984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress the Government has made on increasing the number of BAME members of the judiciary since 2017.

Mike Freer:

The Government has published annual statistics on judicial diversity covering both judges and magistrates since 2020: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/diversity-of-the-judiciary-2022-statistics. Prior to 2020, judicial diversity statistics were published by the Judiciary: www.judiciary.uk/about-the-judiciary/diversity/judicial-diversity-statistics/.

Since 2017, the proportion of judges from an ethnic minority has grown from 8% to 10%. 14% of new judges appointed in 2021/22 were from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of magistrates from an ethnic minority has also grown over the same period: from 11% to 14%. 15% of new magistrates appointed in 2021/22 were from ethnic minority groups.

The government recognises there is more to do and the Ministry of Justice, as a member of the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF), works closely with the judiciary, the Judicial Appointments Commission and the legal professions to take actions to increase judicial diversity. MoJ's actions include funding judicial education and support programmes for lawyers from groups under-represented in the judiciary.

The Government has invested over £1 million to support the recruitment of new and diverse magistrates, the Government's top priority for the magistracy. A new digitised recruitment process alongside an inclusive marketing campaign was launched in January 2022 as part of this programme of work, targeting underrepresented groups to ensure the magistracy is reflective of the communities it serves. A new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) was also introduced, allowing the MoJ to monitor the diversity of applicants which will help inform future recruitment activity.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Energy**Rachael Maskell:****[102887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether magistrates are required to assess (a) the age of each customer and their dependents, (b) whether the customer is (i) disabled and (ii) has an underlying health condition and (c) whether the customer is dependent on home run (A) medical equipment and (B) medical storage when considering an application for a warrant to switch a customer onto a pre-payment meter.

Mike Freer:

The Gas Act 1986 and the Electricity Act 1989 give utility suppliers a right of entry to premises to fit a prepayment meter in the event of payment default. Where that right cannot be exercised, for example where access is denied or the premises are vacant, the provider can apply to a justice of the peace for a warrant to enforce the right.

Prior to such an application, a notice is sent to the occupier of the premises to the effect that such an application will be made, and that if the occupier wishes to make representations concerning the application, it can be listed at a convenient local court.

The application must be in writing and confirmed on oath. In every case the justice must be satisfied that:

- There is a right of entry;
- Admission is reasonably required; and
- The requirements of the Gas Act or Electricity Act have been complied with (this relates principally to the giving of notice).

The relevant law, which the justice must follow, imposes no further requirement, criteria, or guidance.

■ Ministry of Justice: Accountancy**John Cryer:****[101685]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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 Department, including predecessor Departments and its agencies.

Mike Freer:

The above listed suppliers have provided the following services to MoJ including its Executive Agencies and ALBs during the period specified:

- Estates Professional Services;
- Management Consultancy Services;
- Financial Services; and
- Digital and Technology Services.

Please see attached Annex for a breakdown by financial year

Attachments:

1. Annex [\[2022-12-07 101685 - Annex 1 \(2\).xlsx\]](#)

■ **Ministry of Justice: Chief Scientific Advisers**

Greg Clark: [\[100929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice 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.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Termination of Employment**

Steve Reed: [\[102865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff left the Ministry of Justice Head Quarters in the period between (a) September 2018 and September 2019, (b) September 2019 and September 2020, (c) September 2020 and September 2021 and (d) September 2021 and September 2022.

Mike Freer:

The following table shows the number of payroll staff who have left the Ministry of Justice Headquarters in the 12 months to the end of September 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, together with the average staff in post for each period and turnover rate.

LEAVING DATE	LEAVERS	AVERAGE SIP	TURNOVER (%)
1st October 2018 - 30th September 2019	706	4120	17%
1st October 2019 - 30th September 2020	610	4722	13%
1st October 2020 - 30th September 2021	795	5596	14%
1st October 2021 - 30th September 2022	963	6280	15%

Notes and Caveats

(1) These figures also include the following Arms Length Bodies:

- HMI Prisons

- HMI Probation
- IMB Secretariat
- Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman
- Judicial Offices
- Official Solicitor and Public Trustee
- Prisons & Probation Ombudsman
- Sentencing Council
- The Law Commission
- UK National Preventive Mechanism
- Victims Commissioner

(2) All figures given are head count rather than FTE.

■ Prisoners' Release: Maladministration

Steve Reed: [\[100987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether prisoners have been wrongly released from (a) custody and (b) prison as a result of technical errors on the Common Platform.

Steve Reed: [\[100988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Official Report, column 133, on 22 November 2022, on the Common Platform, whether any individuals were released from prison earlier than their release date due to the Common Platform.

Mike Freer:

The information requested is not held centrally.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Community Ownership Fund

Karin Smyth: [\[99891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he will make his decision on Community Ownership Fund round 3 funding.

Dehenna Davison:

The dates of future bidding windows will be announced in due course.

■ Council Housing: Barnsley Central

Dan Jarvis: [\[102922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that council living accommodation in the Barnsley Central constituency is (a) not damp and (b) retrofitted to meet housing standards.

Dan Jarvis: [\[102923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps he has taken to help private housing residents resolve damp issues in their homes in the Barnsley Central constituency.

Dan Jarvis: [\[102924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent conversations with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the impact of mould and damp issues on people's (a) health and (b) wellbeing.

Dehenna Davison:

Social landlords have a legal obligation to ensure their homes are decent and safe. The Secretary of State has [written](#) to social housing providers, and to Chief Executives of local authorities on these issues. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

■ Council Tax: Arrears

Navendu Mishra: [\[103029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the additional cost incurred by those in council tax arrears when a local authority uses a debt collection agent.

Navendu Mishra: [\[103030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of people who are in council tax arrears as of 5 December 2022.

Lee Rowley:

Local councils are responsible for the collection of council tax and any arrears. The Government does not collect data on the number of people who are in council tax arrears. Data on the level of council tax arrears in England can be found in Table 7 [here](#). Further to the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014, the Department has published best practice guidance on council tax collection.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: South Yorkshire

Stephanie Peacock: [\[102966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what was the percentage change in funding from Government to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority in each year since 2010.

Stephanie Peacock: [\[102967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority has received from the Government for each year since 2010.

Lee Rowley:

Detailed information on Core Spending Power, including individual allocations for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) for each year since 2015-16, can be viewed [here](#). Comparable data is not available prior to 2015-16.

Fire and Rescue Authorities also receive some separate funding for specific purposes, including fire protection work and capabilities.

■ **Housing: Fire Prevention**

Matthew Pennycook: [\[102863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department will publish its final developer remediation contracts.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer given in response to Question UIN [82386](#) on 15 November 2022.

■ **Planning**

Sir Gavin Williamson: [\[99827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timescale is for the removal of the duty to cooperate.

Lucy Frazer:

The duty to cooperate will be abolished by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 11 May and has continued its passage through Parliament and Committee stage.

It will remain vital for local planning authorities to work together to make sure that cross-boundary issues are properly addressed, and we expect them to continue to plan for and deliver the housing, other development, and infrastructure that our communities need.

TRANSPORT

■ **A47**

Brandon Lewis: [\[102794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential economic benefits of dualling the A47 (a) in its entirety and (b) Acle Straight.

Mr Richard Holden:

The A47 in East Anglia has and continues to receive significant investment as part of the first and second Road Investment Strategies. National Highways is finalising its route strategies that will inform the third Road Investment Strategy beyond 2025.

Further investment along this corridor will be considered principally within the East of England route strategy. The route strategies for RIS3 will be published in early 2023.

■ Airports: Noise**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[101754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to make sure that the noise impacts of airports are appropriately assessed and action taken.

Jesse Norman:

The Government sets noise-related restrictions at the noise-designated airports (Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted) and ensures these airports assess their noise impacts on an annual basis. For these designated airports, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) produces noise exposure contours. These inform Government of areas significantly affected by aircraft movements, and therefore those communities most likely to suffer aircraft noise-related health outcomes, which should be prioritised by policy interventions.

At other airports, restrictions are set locally, usually through the planning system. It is the responsibility of the local planning authority to conduct any necessary noise assessment and to enforce any restrictions.

Major airports with more than 50,000 movements per year are also obliged under the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006, as amended, to produce noise maps and Noise Action Plans. Current Noise Action Plans cover the period 2019-2023, while the next round of planning will cover the period 2024-2028.

■ Department for Transport: Chief Scientific Advisers**Greg Clark:**[\[100922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Jesse Norman:

(i) 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022

(a) The Secretary of State for Transport had no meetings with his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022.

(b) The Department's Chief Scientific Adviser met with Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister Harrison) on two occasions and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) on one occasion during this time.

ii) 1 March to 31 May 2022

a) The Secretary of State for Transport had no meetings with his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from 1 March to 31 May 2022 and (iii) 1 June to 31 August 2022.

b) The Department's Chief Scientific Adviser met with Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister Harrison) on three occasions and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) on 2 occasions during this time.

iii) 1 June to 31 August 2022

a) The Secretary of State for Transport had no meetings with his Department's Chief Scientific Adviser from 1 June to 31 August 2022.

b) The Department's Chief Scientific Adviser met with Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) on one occasion, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister Harrison) on two occasions and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Karl McCartney) on one occasion during this time.

■ Department of Transport: EU Law

Stella Creasy:

[\[102913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke and (c) retain Regulation (EC) 1371/2007.

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.

■ Gender Based Violence: Transport

David Linden:

[\[99950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy published in March 2022, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the recommendations of that report.

Jesse Norman:

The Department for Transport is part of the cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, and is working with the Home Office and Department for Education to deliver the ambitions of the recommendations from our Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.

■ Motor Vehicles: Greater London

Munira Wilson:

[\[103050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he will put in place a scrappage scheme to support people in London switching to greener vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has no plans to introduce a national vehicle scrappage scheme. The Mayor of London has announced a limited vehicle scrappage scheme in relation to his proposed Ultra Low Emission Zone. However, it is only available for cars and motorcycles to support Londoners on certain means-tested benefits or non-means tested disability benefits, and one for vans and minibuses to support eligible micro businesses, sole traders, and charities.

Public Transport: Females**David Linden:**[\[99959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has undertaken work to develop a national Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit following the publication of recommendations from the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in March 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to ensuring women and girls are safe on the transport network. We welcome the ambition of the recommendations from the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and agree that the principle of safe access to transport networks must be embedded in the core objectives of transport policy and its implementation.

Following the Transport Champions' recommendation on national transport planning guidance, the Department for Transport has reviewed existing gender in transport toolkits and is using these to inform improvements to guidance, including the forthcoming Local Transport Plan guidance.

Railway Stations: Tickets**Navendu Mishra:**[\[103009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of ticket office closures on disabled people.

Huw Merriman:

Today just 12% of rail ticket transactions take place at ticket offices so it is now time to review how best station staff are deployed to ensure they are providing the best service to all passengers, including disabled people. Details of how these reforms will work is for the employers and unions but any changes would be informed by the experience of Transport for London where a similar approach has worked well for some years. The Secretary of State has been clear that he wants to make sure the railway is accessible for all.

Railways: Concessions**Caroline Lucas:**[\[102818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend eligibility for the 50 per cent discount on train travel provided by the 16 to 17 saver rail card to students for the whole

of the academic year in which they turn 18; whether he has discussed the impact on students of the different level of concessions available to students in the same academic year with the Secretary of State for Education; and if he will make a statement.

Huw Merriman:

We are not currently planning to extend the eligibility for the 16-17 Saver. The 16-17 Saver is designed to provide additional support for young people who are required to remain in education and/or training until they turn 18. The 16-25 Railcard is available to those who are no longer eligible for the 16-17 Saver.

Young people are eligible for half price child rail fares until they turn 16, and the 16-17 Saver provides all young people with access to those half price rail fares for a further two years. No discussions have taken place on the impact on students of the different level of concessions available to students in the same academic year.

■ **Railways: Freight**

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[102904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will outline his Department's process for granting a Development Consent Order for a strategic rail freight interchange.

Huw Merriman:

An application for development consent for a strategic rail freight interchange in England will first be made to The Planning Inspectorate. When the Examining Authority appointed to examine the application has completed its examination, it will send a report containing its conclusions and recommendation to the Secretary of State. Once the report is received, a decision has to be made within three months unless the Secretary of State agrees to extend the deadline. The report will be considered by officials in the Department's Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit. They will submit advice to the Minister who has been delegated to make decisions on applications for consent for rail freight infrastructure. The Minister will then consider whether or not consent should be granted taking into account the relevant planning matters. If consent is granted, a decision letter, containing the reasons for the decision, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (if required) and a Development Consent Order will be issued.

■ **Railways: Passengers**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[101755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment on the variation in railway passenger numbers on different weekdays; and if he will make it his Department's policy to mandate train companies to introduce a different timetable with more capacity on the days with more passengers.

Huw Merriman:

Industry is already running more trains on working days, when more passengers are likely to travel to and from work, and on Saturdays, when many passengers use the railway for leisure. The train operating companies will use the December 2022

timetable change to make significant changes to the national timetable to improve the service passengers receive, and continue to tailor their offer to demand. These changes are intended to improve performance for passengers and provide services that respond to current passenger demand and suit the needs of local communities.

■ Road Traffic: Urban Areas

Tom Hunt:

[\[101798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to support local authorities in reducing traffic congestion in town centres.

Mr Richard Holden:

The causes of congestion can be systemic, for example increasing population and urbanisation, or more localised, for example network pinch points, inadequate public transport or road works. Measures to combat congestion can be aimed at increasing capacity and / or decreasing demand.

Local traffic authorities have a statutory duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to manage their networks with the aim of 'securing the expeditious movement of traffic'. The Department for Transport helps local authorities in achieving this by supporting sustainable alternative modes and providing design and other guidance as well as investment in infrastructure and innovative, data-led solutions.

The Government has already made record amounts of funding available to local authorities for investment in active travel schemes since the start of the pandemic. The second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, published in July of this year, reiterated the Government's commitment to this important agenda and set out the funding that is projected to be spent on it from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

The National Bus Strategy asked that all English Local Transport Authorities outside London publish Bus Service Improvement Plans, setting out local visions for the step-change in bus services that is needed, driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want. We have awarded over £1 billion to deliver service improvements, bus priority and ambitious fares initiatives.

The Government continues to invest in new technologies and the use of data to better manage road networks and provide accurate data about events such as congestion, to road users. For example, the department has invested several million pounds in creating 'Street Manager', a data platform which helps highway authorities and utility companies to plan and co-ordinate their road works.

■ Train Operating Companies: Standards

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[101033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has had recent discussions with (a) Great Western Railway, (b) Cross Country Trains, (c) Greater Anglia, (d) LNER, (e) East Midlands Railway, (f) c2c, (g) Chiltern Railways, (h) GTR, (i) Northern Trains, (j) South Eastern, (k) South Western Railway, (l) TransPennine Express, (m) Avanti West Coast and (n) West Midlands Trains on the (i) quality and (ii) frequency of

their train services; and whether he will take steps to mandate for those companies to negotiate the wages of railway staff.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is in regular discussion with all 14 train operating companies about the quality and frequency of train services to ensure that operators are held to account for delivering services that meet new passenger travel patterns, are fit for the future, and carefully balance cost, capacity and performance.

The Rail Delivery Group are negotiating with Trade Unions on proposed pay offers at a national level on behalf of Train Operating Companies (the employers). Ministers' role is to facilitate and support the ongoing discussions between the rail industry and Trade Unions regarding workforce reform and pay.

■ **Transport: Gender Based Violence**

David Linden:

[99960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has taken steps to introduce mandatory consultation by local authorities on transport projects with women and girls from various cultures, backgrounds and ages following the publication of recommendations from the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in March 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

We welcome the ambition of the recommendations from the Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls. In line with their recommendation on national transport planning guidance, the Department for Transport is updating guidance on consultation for local transport schemes as part of its forthcoming Local Transport Plan guidance.

In addition, as part of their Public Sector Equality Duty, when designing transport projects local authorities must consider the needs of people in relation to characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010, including sex, age and race.

■ **Vegetable Oils**

Jessica Morden:

[99779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the supply of hydrogenated vegetable oil in the UK.

Jesse Norman:

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) is the Government's primary mechanism for supporting the supply of renewable fuels such as hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO). While the RTFO does not incentivise specific fuels, fuels produced from wastes receive additional support under the scheme, this includes HVO produced from waste feedstocks. More information on how the RTFO encourages the supply of low carbon fuels, such as HVO, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-transport-fuels-obligation>

TREASURY

■ Child Tax Credit

Neale Hanvey:

[\[100007\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Child Tax 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.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[100008\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Working Tax 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.

Victoria Atkins:

Information on the total expenditure on benefit claimants receiving Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit by Local Authority and Westminster Parliamentary Constituency would only be available at disproportionate cost.

The table below summarises the total expenditure on benefit claimants receiving any Personal Tax Credits for each year from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022.

Total expenditure on benefit claimants receiving Personal Tax Credits, 2017-18 to 2021-22

£M	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
England ⁽¹⁾	22,101	18,751	15,432	12,676	9,174
Scotland	1,821	1,540	1,240	999	715
Wales	1,320	1,132	922	746	533
Northern Ireland	973	849	726	637	490

Source: Country and regional analysis: 2022

(1) England is calculated as the sum of its 9 Government Office Regions

Information on the number of benefit claimants receiving Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit in each of the last 5 years in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, each Westminster Parliamentary Constituency and each Local Authority can be collated from published official statistics on Child and Working Tax Credit Awards between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021. Statistics for 2021-2022 will be published in Summer 2023.

Links to published statistics for 2016-2017 to 2020-2021 can be found below:

[Personal tax credits: finalised award statistics - geographical statistics 2016 to 2017 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Personal tax credits: finalised award statistics - geographical statistics 2017 to 2018 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Personal tax credits: finalised award statistics - geographical statistics 2018 to 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Child and Working Tax Credits statistics: finalised annual awards - 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Child and Working Tax Credits statistics: Finalised Annual Awards – 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

■ Duty Free Allowances

Richard Thomson: [\[100018\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of introducing duty free stores on arrival to the UK.

Richard Thomson: [\[100019\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of annual revenue made by Aberdeen Airport is non-aeronautical revenue; and if he will make an assessment of the potential effect of introducing duty-free stores on arrival on that level of revenue.

Richard Thomson: [\[100020\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has received any independent research on the impact of duty free on arrivals stores in other countries.

Richard Thomson: [\[100021\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made any assessment of the potential impact duty free on arrivals stores could have on the revenue generation of (a) UK travel hubs and (b) Aberdeen Airport.

James Cartlidge:

Duty-free on arrival, which would apply to inbound passengers, would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which excise duty makes a significant contribution. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

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

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[102788\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2022 to Question 96553 on Duty Free Allowances, if he will publish the evidence which demonstrates that the introduction of arrivals duty free shopping in the UK would have a different impact from that experienced in Norway and Switzerland.

James Cartlidge:

As mentioned in the answer to Question 96553, duty-free on arrival, which would apply to inbound passengers, would place additional pressure on the public finances to which excise duty makes a significant contribution.

Although there are no plans to introduce such a scheme, the Government keeps all taxes under review and considers all available evidence as part of the tax-policy making cycle.

■ **Economic Growth****Sarah Olney:**[\[102868\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the total spending on promoting the Growth Plan delivered on Friday 23 September 2022.

James Cartlidge:

No additional costs were incurred in promoting the Growth Plan delivered on Friday 23rd September. All press and social media products were produced by the Treasury's internal communication team, and no advertising spend was incurred.

■ **Economics: Policy****Sarah Olney:**[\[102873\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of staff who have worked on macroeconomic policy and planning in his Department in each of the last five years.

Andrew Griffith:

HM Treasury is the government's economic and finance ministry, maintaining control over public spending, setting the direction of the UK's economic policy and working to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth.

HMT takes a flexible and dynamic approach to resourcing in order to meet this objective. As a result, there are a number of officials, across groups, working on macroeconomic policy and planning and total numbers of staff fluctuate within and across years.

The number of paid full time equivalent staff in the Treasury was as follows over the past 5 years.

DATE	NUMBER OF HMT STAFF EMPLOYED
March 2022	2,045
March 2021	1,992
March 2020	1,599
March 2019	1,447

DATE	NUMBER OF HMT STAFF EMPLOYED
March 2018	1,328

■ Electricity Generation: Investment Returns

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[102728\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November to Question 94670 on Electricity Generation: Taxation, what the sufficient level of return to incentivise investment required to transition to net zero.

James Cartlidge:

The Electricity Generator Levy is a temporary levy which has been designed to allow generators to retain a proportion of the extraordinary return they are making in excess of a benchmark price which has been set at 1.5 times the average price of electricity over the last decade

In the Government's view this balances the need to raise revenue to fund public services and energy support for households and businesses, while incentivising the investment needed to fuel our transition to net zero.

■ Females: Taxation

Karin Smyth: [\[99889\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of his proposals for tax in the Autumn Statement 2022 on women.

Victoria Atkins:

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Government carefully considers the equality impacts of policies on those sharing protected characteristics, including sex, in line with both its legal obligations and its strong commitment to fairness.

The Treasury and HMRC publishes equality impacts in summary form for tax measures in Tax Information and Impact Notes (TIINs) alongside Finance Bills.

■ Financial Services: Environment Protection

Alexander Stafford: [\[101091\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the report entitled the UK Green Taxonomy, published December 2022 by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101092\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to update the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101093\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he has made an assessment for the implications of his policies of the report on the UK Green Taxonomy published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101094\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report on the UK Green Taxonomy published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, whether the UK Green Taxonomy should be (a) credible, (b) useable, and (c) interoperable.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101095\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled the UK Green Taxonomy, published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, if the UK Green Taxonomy will be science-based.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101096\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Environmental, Social, and Governance entitled The UK Green Taxonomy, published in November 2022, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of both a transitional taxonomy and a UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101097\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled the UK Green Taxonomy, published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, if his Department will publish an updated timeline for the development of the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101098\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Environmental, Social, and Governance entitled The UK Green Taxonomy, published in November 2022, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the Green Technical Advisory Group on the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Environmental, Social, and Governance entitled The UK Green Taxonomy, published in November 2022, if he will take steps to publish a consultation on the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled the UK Green Taxonomy, published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, if he will make it his priority to develop the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101816\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report entitled the UK Green Taxonomy, published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the potential impact of developing a UK Green Taxonomy on steps being taken by other nations to implement similar frameworks.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101817\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the report on the UK Green Taxonomy published by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance on 1 December 2022, what plans his Department has to publish a first set of Technical Screening Criteria for the UK Green Taxonomy.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101818\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the extent to which UK companies' activities will be aligned to the UK Green Taxonomy as set out in the White Paper on Greening Finance published on 18 October 2021.

Alexander Stafford: [\[101819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how the UK Green Taxonomy will operate with other countries' green taxonomies; and if he will take steps with his international counterparts to implement internationally interoperable green taxonomies.

Andrew Griffith:

The UK is a leading centre for green finance, with London having been ranked first in the world for a third year, according to the Global Green Finance Index. It is important that our approach for the taxonomy builds on this and contributes to our ambition to be the world's first net zero-aligned financial centre.

The value of a taxonomy rests on its credibility as a practical and useful tool for corporates and investors, that its users recognise as science-based. It is important that we learn from the approach taken in other jurisdictions, and take the time to get this right for the UK and the market. The UK Green Taxonomy Consultation is under review and the government will be setting out next steps in due course.

The government has been engaging closely with the independent Green Technical Advisory Group and is considering the recommendations which they have recently published. The government has noted the publication of the UK Green Taxonomy report, by the APPG on Environmental, Social, and Governance, and will consider the views of a variety of stakeholders as it prepares to set out its next steps.

The Government has also been supporting the development of international standards in green finance, for example through the International Sustainability Standards Board.

■ Gender Based Violence

David Linden: [\[99962\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that Departmental funding for preventing violence against women and girls is protected from potential real-terms spending reductions.

John Glen:

Tackling violence against women and girls is a Government priority. We have made significant progress since publishing the cross-Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan in 2021 and 2022 respectively, which committed £230 million across-Government to tackling this heinous crime.

In future years, it will be for those departments that lead on Violence Against Women and Girls to determine funding allocations for this work within their wider budgets.

■ Regional Airports: Government Assistance

Richard Thomson: [\[100017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take fiscal steps to support regional airports including Aberdeen Airport.

James Cartlidge:

The aviation sector is an important part of the UK's economy, and we are committed to supporting and restarting it.

At Autumn Budget 2021, the Government announced reforms to Air Passenger Duty (APD) on domestic flights in order to support UK-wide connectivity. To support connectivity, the new domestic rate will apply to all flights between airports in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (excluding private jets) and will be set at £6.50 for economy passengers, benefitting around 9 million passengers in 2023/24.

The air transport sector has benefitted from significant pandemic related Government support. This includes support through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. In addition, we supported regional airports through our Airports and Ground Operations Support Scheme.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation

Derek Thomas: [\[99935\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which (a) lower-strength and (b) alcohol-free alcohol substitute (i) products and (ii) brands are exempted from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy.

James Cartlidge:

HMRC does not maintain a list of products and brands that are exempt from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy and there is no requirement for such drinks to be reported to HMRC.

The question of whether a particular product is exempt therefore depends on the specific facts and content of any given soft drink. Further guidance is provided at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-your-drink-is-liable-for-the-soft-drinks-industry-levy>.

■ **Treasury: Staff****Sarah Olney:****[102869]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have been employed by his Department in (a) communications and (b) public relations roles in each of the last five years.

James Cartlidge:

The number of people employed in the Treasury Communications team was as follows over the past 5 years. No separate public relations staff are employed.

DATE	NUMBER OF COMMUNICATIONS STAFF EMPLOYED
September 2022	36
September 2021	40
September 2020	39
September 2019	28
September 2018	30

■ **VAT: Charities****Dan Jarvis:****[102921]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will exempt charities from VAT where a minimum donation on goods is required.

Victoria Atkins:

Where a charity chooses to offer its goods or services for free and invites voluntary donations, with no minimum payment required and with no expectation of anything in return, no VAT is charged.

Where the charity wishes to sell its goods and services for a set price, and is VAT registered, it must charge VAT unless a VAT relief exists. There is no VAT due on an amount paid voluntarily over and above the set price.

Charities benefit from a range of tax reliefs, including a zero-rate relief for the sale of donated goods. Costed tax reliefs value these at over £5.4 billion in the year ending April 2022.

While all taxes are kept under review, we have no plans to make changes to the VAT treatment of minimum donations.

■ Vegetable Oils: Tax Allowances

Jessica Morden:

[\[99775\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on introducing tax relief for hydrogenated vegetable oil for industries that lost access to red diesel in April 2022.

James Cartlidge:

Hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) is eligible for Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), and is eligible to receive twice the reward in certificates under this scheme where it is produced from waste.

The Government uses the RTFO to incentivise the use of low carbon fuels and reduce emissions from fuel supplied for use in transport and non-road mobile machinery. The RTFO has been highly successful in supporting a market for renewable fuel since its introduction in 2008. Renewable fuels supplied under the RTFO currently contribute a third of the savings required for the UK's transport carbon budget.

As with all taxes, the Government will keep the tax treatment of HVO under review.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carer's Allowance

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[101014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of Carer's Allowance have earnings below the earnings threshold for that benefit.

Tom Pursglove:

By default, all Carer's Allowance (CA) recipients in employment have earnings below the CA earnings limit, as it is not possible to claim CA while earnings from employment are above the CA earnings limit. Those receiving CA who are not in employment are not affected by the CA earnings limit.

■ Cost of Living Payments: Medical Equipment

Ian Byrne:

[\[103035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will introduce additional Cost of Living payments for those using powered medical equipment at home.

Ian Byrne:

[\[103036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of Cost of Living payments at enabling people who use powered medical equipment at home to pay their energy costs.

Tom Pursglove:

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, including disabled people, and has taken further, decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The Energy Price Guarantee is supporting millions of households with rising energy costs, and will continue to do so through cost of living support announced earlier this year, which includes:

- the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme;
- a Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 to six million people in recognition of the extra costs they face, including with energy costs;
- up to £650 in Cost of Living Payments for the eight million households in receipt of a means-tested benefit;
- a one-off payment of £300 through, and as an addition to, the Winter Fuel Payment from November to pensioner households.

To ensure ongoing stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement, we announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people as well as the basic and new State Pensions by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1%. Alongside further Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable, the amended Energy Price Guarantee will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

For those who require extra support, the Government is providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England in the next financial year. This is on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £2.5 billion. In England, this will be delivered through an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £842 million, running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which local authorities use to help households with the cost of essentials. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

■ Employment: Long Covid

Richard Burgon:

[\[99916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to provide long-term support with seeking employment to people suffering from long covid.

Tom Pursglove:

A range of Government initiatives are supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, including those suffering from long covid, 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;
- 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; and
- 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.

■ Housing Benefit: Rents**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[102971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment has he made of the adequacy of housing benefits in light of increasing rental costs.

Mims Davies:

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum financial support available for renters in the private rented sector who are in receipt of housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit. LHA rates are not intended to meet all rents in all areas.

For Great Britain in May 2022, 55% of the households on LHA had rents higher than the LHA rates. For these households the average gap was £146 per month.

In 2020 LHA rates were raised to the 30th percentile, a significant investment of almost £1 billion, we have maintained the increase since then so that everyone who benefited from the increase continues to do so.

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 £1bn to help with the cost of household essentials, for the 2023-24 financial year, on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding for this support to £2.5 billion.

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.

■ Long Covid

Richard Burgon:

[99917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has had discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, (b) other Cabinet colleagues and (c) stakeholders on the potential merits of classifying long covid as an occupational disease.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is committed to providing a strong financial safety net for those in need. The benefit system is set up to consider the impact that a health condition has on an individual's ability to work and carry-out day to day activities. In terms of support for those with health conditions, decisions are based on an assessment of an individual's functional ability, not their diagnosed health condition(s). All health care practitioners who carry out assessments on behalf of the department have access to specific training and guidance modules on a wide range of clinical conditions, including long-COVID.

DWP is responsible for the Industrial Injuries Scheme which compensates for injuries arising from an industrial accident or a prescribed disease contracted as a result of a person's occupation. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) is an independent body of experts who advise the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions regarding the scheme. The Council considered the available scientific and epidemiological evidence around COVID-19 infection and has published a Command Paper entitled, 'COVID-19 and occupational impacts'. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-occupational-impacts>.

We will carefully consider the recommendations in the Command Paper and respond in due course.

We will also continue to liaise with colleagues across Government and other stakeholders.

■ Means-tested Benefits

Sarah Olney:

[102970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to introduce means testing for (a) Disability Living Allowance and (b) Personal Independence Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

We have no plans to means test Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Both DLA and PIP are intended to act as a contribution towards the extra costs that arise as a result of a long-term health condition, or disability, and have been non-means tested since they were introduced.

■ Pension Credit

Neale Hanvey:

[100006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the total (a) expenditure on and (b) number of benefit claimants receiving Pension 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.

Laura Trott:

Estimates on the number of benefit claimants receiving Pension Credit in each of the last five years, in (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales can be found on Stat-Xplore here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for using Stat-Xplore is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

Estimates on total expenditure on Pension Credit in each of the last five years, in (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales can be found in the latest benefit expenditure tables here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035981/benefit-expenditure-by-country-and-region-2020-21.ods

Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency Pension Credit caseload data can be found on Stat-Xplore here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency Pension Credit expenditure data are available here:

Local Authority:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035984/benefit-expenditure-by-local-authority-2020-21.ods

Parliamentary Constituency:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035994/benefit-expenditure-by-parliamentary-constituency-2020-21.ods

Benefit statistics in Northern Ireland are produced by the Department for Communities, and can be found here: [Benefits statistics | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Pensioners: Greater London

Tulip Siddiq:

[101027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department are taking to support pensioners in (a) Hampstead and Kilburn constituency and (b) Greater London with the rising cost of living.

Laura Trott:

All pensioner households in Hampstead and Kilburn constituency and Greater London are in the process of receiving an extra £300 on top of their winter fuel payment to help them cover the rising cost of energy this winter. For those in receipt of Pension Credit the second Cost of Living Payment of £324 was issued in November. Pensioners in receipt of eligible disability benefits will have also received the disability cost of living payment of £150 issued in September.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and that pensioners are disproportionately impacted by higher energy costs, and many low-income pensioner households do not claim the means tested benefits they are entitled to. That is why, in addition to the £37 billion of support we have provided for cost of living pressures in 2022/23, we are acting now to ensure support continues throughout 2023/24.

To ensure stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement the Government has announced £26 billion in cost of living support for 2023/24. In 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to a further £900 in Cost of Living Payments. A £300 payment will be made to pensioner households and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment. Also included is the amended Energy Price Guarantee which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023/24 and raising the benefit cap by 10.1% in line with inflation.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Carers

Vicky Foxcroft:

[99914]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the cost of giving access to the State Pension to unpaid carers who meet the qualifying criteria for Carer's Allowance up to five years earlier than State Pension Age.

Laura Trott:

This Government is committed to providing a financial safety net for those who need it, including when they near or reach retirement. Support is available through the

welfare system for those who are unable to work or are on a low income but are not eligible to pensioner benefits because of their age.

Unpaid carers of working age will have access to a range of support from the social security system where they meet the conditions. This includes Carer's Allowance and Universal Credit for example, where the Carer's Element is worth around £2,000 a year.

We believe it is important to ensure that people have certainty about when they can expect to receive their State Pension and a universal state pension age ensures the State Pension system is sustainable and fair to future generations.

Unlike a personal or workplace pension, which can potentially be drawn earlier, it has always been the case that nobody can claim their State Pension early, before they reach their State Pension age.

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

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females**

Feryal Clark:

[\[101812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he will formally respond to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's 2021 report into the impact of State Pension Age equalisation on women.

Laura Trott:

It would not be appropriate to comment on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Stage one report published on 20 July 2021. The Ombudsman's investigation is ongoing and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

This is a multi-staged process, and the Ombudsman has not given his final findings on the investigation. We are cooperating with the Ombudsman's investigation.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

John Healey:

[\[97488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September 2022 to Question 49057 on Afghanistan: Refugees, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications were awaiting an initial decision by his Department as of 28 November 2022.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 December 2022. The correct answer should have been:

James Heappey:

To date, we have relocated over 12,000 ARAP principals and their dependants to the UK, including over 5,000 since Op PITTING concluded at the end of August 2021.

As of 29 November 2022, there are approximately 74,135 ARAP applicants awaiting a decision on their application. However, it is important to note that this includes applicants who did not provide valid contact details when submitting their application. Furthermore, based on employment records we estimate that the vast majority of the outstanding 74,135 applicants are ineligible under the ARAP Scheme.

~~We are focussing our efforts on identifying those eligible individuals who are still awaiting a decision and relocating all those eligible to the UK. The ARAP team continue to focus on indentifying and relocating the estimated remaining 795 ARAP eligible individuals, with an estimated 3,180 dependants, assessed to be in Afghanistan using HMG employomnet records to target efforts.~~

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ International Cooperation on Telecoms Diversification

Minister for Media, Data and Digital Infrastructure (Julia Lopez): [\[HCWS423\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that, today, DCMS is announcing a joint statement on telecoms diversification alongside the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America. This further progresses HM Government's efforts to build global support for our approach to telecoms diversification and identify tangible opportunities for collaboration with a range of international partners as set out in the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy in 2020, and following the recommendations of the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce in 2021.

The joint statement marks the one-year anniversary of the 2021 Prague Proposals on Telecommunications Supplier Diversity, to which our four governments have reaffirmed our commitment. It also announces the endorsement of the UK's Open RAN Principles by the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America, which I would like to welcome.

Collectively, these governments hold a shared view that open and interoperable solutions could help to create a more diverse, competitive and innovative telecoms supply market. To support this we intend to work together across a number of areas ranging from sharing information on our respective policy approaches, to supporting greater transparency in industry-led standard setting processes. We also intend to seek ongoing support from other like minded countries truly to realise the benefits of a diverse telecoms supply chain on a global scale.

This announcement builds on the strong progress we have made to increase the resilience and security of the UK's telecoms critical national infrastructure since the publication of the 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy, which is backed by the £250 million Open Networks Fund committed at the 2021 Spending Review. The fund aims to accelerate the adoption of Open RAN solutions as a means to diversify the market. It includes research and development interventions of up to £36 million for the Future RAN Competition (FRANC), up to £25 million for Future Open Networks Research Challenge, as well as funding for testing facilities such as the SmartRAN Open Networks Interoperability Centre (SONIC), and the UK Telecoms Lab. HM Government has also previously announced a joint ambition with UK mobile network operators to increase the share of open and interoperable equipment in UK networks by 2030. Indeed we are also seeing positive progress from industry - for example, Vodafone and Telefonica have now deployed their first live Open RAN sites with both using new market entrants.

While there is still more to do, today represents a significant milestone in the Government's efforts to grow international consensus on telecoms diversification. In order to support a lasting and meaningful change it will be crucial for the global community to work together.

I am grateful to the governments of Australia, Canada and the United States of America and look forward to working with them, along with partners around the world, to achieve our vision of a more innovative, competitive and diverse telecoms supply market.

Full details of the announcement will be published on www.gov.uk today.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Devolution in England

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS424\]](#)

The Levelling Up White Paper set out the Government's ambition that, by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement. Stronger, more empowered, and more accountable local leadership is core to our levelling up mission, to delivering on the ground, to growing our local economies and to improving public services.

In Summer 2022, the Government concluded devolution deals with York and North Yorkshire, and that part of the East Midlands which includes Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire. Subject to the ongoing local consultations and satisfactory completion of the statutory processes, including local consent by the councils and Parliamentary approval of the secondary legislation to implement the deals, the inaugural mayoral elections are planned for May 2024. The East Midlands deal is also dependent on the enactment of provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill necessary for the establishment of the proposed East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority.

The Government has now concluded three more devolution deals with Cornwall, Norfolk and Suffolk. These are the first set of the new County Deals that extend devolution to more of England. Each deal will result in the election of a mayor or directly elected leader to champion the area with government and business. These deals are subject to locally run consultations, resolution by each of Cornwall Council, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council to change their governance models so that electors directly elect the council leader, and to the satisfactory conclusion of the statutory processes, including local consent from the councils and Parliamentary approval to the secondary legislation to implement the deals. Inaugural elections for a mayor or directly elected leader in each of the areas are planned for May 2024. They will have the choice of alternative titles to "mayor" for these elections, subject to provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill being enacted.

These five new devolution deals will drive forward improved outcomes for the 5 million people that live in those areas. Taken together, they take the proportion of England now covered by a devolution deal to above 50% for the first time. They will deliver new funding including long-term investment funds to invest in local priorities that drive growth and levelling up, totalling over £3 billion over 30 years.

The Government is also in advanced negotiations on a North East devolution deal that will supersede the current North of Tyne Combined Authority that covers only Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. A deal is expected to be concluded shortly and further details will be announced.

Negotiations on trailblazer deeper devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities are progressing well and expected to conclude early in 2023. These deals seek to devolve further powers in areas such as skills, transport, housing and net zero, alongside potential department-style single funding settlements and stronger accountability focussed on outcomes. They will act as a blueprint for other areas to follow. We are interested in other MCAs coming forward with ideas for new functions. We will begin talks with other MCAs on deeper devolution from next year. The Government will set out more on plans for those talks soon.

Effective devolution requires local leaders and institutions that are transparent and accountable. This is why the Government will be publishing the Devolution Accountability Framework in early 2023, alongside a Funding Simplification Plan, setting out the accountability mechanisms for MCAs, the Greater London Authority and other institutions that have agreed a devolution deal. It will set out how they are scrutinised and held to account by the UK Government, local politicians and business leaders and above all by the residents and voters of their area. This work will be supported by planned improvements to the broader Local Government Accountability Framework including the establishment of the Office for Local Government.

The Government will step ahead in extending devolution in England further. We will continue to work with local government in England to roll out further mayoral combined authorities, combined county authorities, and county deals. Discussions with places to identify potential candidates for the next set of new devolution deals will start in early 2023. The Government is particularly interested in exploring opportunities for devolution deals that will empower local leaders and communities where places want a directly elected leader, in line with the devolution framework published in the Levelling Up White Paper.

The above demonstrates strong progress towards achieving the 2030 local leadership mission, which is essential to levelling up. In these areas across England, more of the decisions which matter to people – on transport, housing, and skills – will be taken by locally elected, democratically accountable leaders rooted in their place and empowered to level up.