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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ **Business: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[105383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with businesses in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency on the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on those businesses.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses, including those in Ellesmere Port and Neston, and is engaging with businesses across the UK to understand these challenges and explore ways to mitigate them.

The Government has reversed the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs £4,200 on average; cut fuel duty for 12 months; raised the Employment Allowance to £5,000 and introduced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which is shielding businesses across the country from soaring energy prices, saving some around half of their wholesale energy costs.

We have also announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

#### ■ **Care Homes: Power Failures**

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

[\[101757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for Health and Social Care on the impact on care homes who are unable to get added to the priority list for power recovery during a power cut or qualify for a permanent supply line.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is working closely with the Department of Health & Social Care to mitigate the impacts associated with the upcoming winter.

Care homes are not included on the list of Approved Designated Services as set out in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code, and therefore do not qualify for Protected Site status. Sites are ultimately still responsible for their own business continuity and should not rely on being on the Protected Sites List for their power resilience. The Electricity Supply Emergency Code only applies to certain scenarios and does not give sites complete coverage for all possible power disruption events.

■ **Consumer Goods: Safety**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[105438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the Product Safety review to which the Government committed in Spring 2022.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The product safety review's consultation, which will set out the government's ambition for fundamental reform, is being finalised for publication and will be brought forward as quickly as possible.

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

**Sarah Olney:** [\[104226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department has spent on energy costs in each of the last 5 years.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Minister has cleared the below:

At the Department's headquarters building at 1 Victoria Street, London, the net spend on energy for the last five financial years was as follows:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<b>Energy Spend</b>	£799,370	£860,935	£718,595	£555,825	£700,199

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Energy Supply**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[104299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an estimate of the depreciation of the value of properties whose communal energy supply is bought on their behalf by management companies at a commercial rate.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department has not seen evidence of property value depreciation as a result of communal energy supply being bought by management companies, but would welcome the provision of any such evidence.

■ **Director of Labour Market Enforcement**

**Tony Lloyd:** [\[102813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has received the Director of Labour Market Enforcement's 2023-24 Strategy.



**Kevin Hollinrake:**

I recently met with the Director of Labour Market Enforcement where she updated me on progress in finalising her strategy for next year. When ready this will be published in line with statutory requirements.

**■ District Heating****Seema Malhotra:**[\[104300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to provide support to households whose property value has depreciated because the property is heated by a communal energy supply for which energy is purchased at the commercial rate.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department has not heard instances of property value depreciating due to a heat network connection, but will continue to monitor this situation.

**Munira Wilson:**[\[105531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons it is his Department's policy that heat network customers are receiving equivalent support under the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to those eligible for the Energy Price Guarantee.

**Graham Stuart:**

Heat network consumers need protection from the soaring energy prices this winter period, as the cost of energy for many heat network operators has increased. Regulations covering the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) and associated pass-through requirements ensure that heat network operators and other intermediaries pass on any EBRS benefits to the end user in a just and reasonable way.

**■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Housing Associations****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[105215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether housing associations will be included in the Treasury-led Review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to assess the energy support they will require beyond March 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

HM Treasury is currently conducting a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. Evidence from housing associations has been received. The Government cannot confirm which sectors will receive further support after 31st March 2023 until the end of the review, which will report by the end of the year.

**■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters****Ruth Cadbury:** [\[101746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who get their energy supply through a pre-payment metre who have not received the first instalment of the energy voucher.

**Graham Stuart:**

Customers with traditional prepayment meters should have received their first and second Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) discount vouchers. These would have been sent by SMS text, email, post or a Special Action Message. Data for October indicates all vouchers were dispatched by suppliers, and take up was over 60%. Updated figures are due shortly.

The EBSS discount is credited automatically to smart prepayment meters.

**Gill Furniss:** [\[101764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps is he taking to address energy companies that are failing to deliver Energy Bills Support Scheme vouchers to traditional prepayment meter customers in a timely manner.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 4th December, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to all energy suppliers with customers on traditional prepayment meters. He reiterated the importance of ensuring these customers receive their vouchers and, where needed, receive prompt service and accurate information from supplier call centres. Data for October indicates that all vouchers were dispatched by suppliers.

**■ Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes****Anthony Mangnall:** [\[101068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that elderly people living in park homes who do not have internet access are able to access the £400 energy bills discount.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government will ensure that households without internet access can apply for the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding over the phone.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:** [\[105546\]](#)

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

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is working to finalise the details of the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding and have the process up and running for applications as soon as possible. Eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced shortly.

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[105548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will make an announcement on eligibility and delivery of energy bills support to park home residents.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is finalising the eligibility, delivery arrangements for the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding and will be announcing details shortly.

**Energy Company Obligation****Charlotte Nichols:**[\[101071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to bring forward the introduction of the ECO+ scheme to winter 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government intends to lay the necessary legislation for the scheme to launch in Spring 2023 and run until March 2026. We are also working with energy suppliers to explore the potential for some earlier delivery in 2023, before the legislation comes into force.

**Energy Company Obligation: Wirral South****Alison McGovern:**[\[100955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes in Wirral South have had ECO scheme measures installed as of 24 November 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

BEIS publishes information on the number of households in receipt of ECO measures by Parliamentary Constituency in Table 4.5 accompanying the latest [Household Energy Efficiency Statistics release](#).

**Energy: Billing****Emma Hardy:**[\[101043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that energy suppliers punctually and adequately refund the credit balances of their customers who pay for their energy (a) by direct debit and (b) in other ways.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has no plans to intervene in this area. Under existing rules set by Ofgem, suppliers must automatically refund outstanding credit balances within 10 days of issuing a final bill. Suppliers must also refund accumulated credit on request by an existing customer in a timely manner unless they have reasonable grounds not to.

## ■ Energy: Park Homes

**Lee Anderson:** [\[101061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to provide energy support to mobile home park residents.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount for households who will not be reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme. This includes some park home residents. The Government will be publishing further details about eligibility shortly.

Those living in park homes will also receive support equivalent to the Energy Price Guarantee. The business in a direct commercial relationship with the energy supplier (for example, the park home site owner) is receiving support via the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) and is required to pass this support on to end users.

## ■ Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002

**Stella Creasy:** [\[105309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans they have to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Fixed-Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

## ■ Fossil Fuels: Russia

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[100905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made on reducing levels of Russian oil and gas imported into the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The UK is ending all imports of Russian fossil fuels in response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The UK ended coal imports from Russia from 10 August, oil and oil products from 5 December, and imports of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be banned from 1 January 2023.

Provisional [data](#) shows the UK imported no Russian LNG in the three months to October 2022. This data also shows that the UK imported 0.3% of gross oil supply (production & imports) from Russia, down from 4.3% in the same period in 2021.

## ■ Fracking

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[101021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on fracking; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of permitting fracking on the Government's net zero emissions target for 2050.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has adopted a presumption against issuing any further hydraulic fracturing consents. This is an effective moratorium on fracking and is in line with the commitment made in the 2019 Conservative Manifesto. This position will be maintained until compelling new evidence is provided which addresses concerns around the prediction and management of induced seismicity. There are no plans to put the moratorium on a legislative basis at this time.

Assessing the impact on net zero where there is an ongoing moratorium in place would not be a good use of Government resources.

## ■ Hospitals: Power Failures

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[97608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many hospitals are registered as a critical site or service in the Protected Sites List under the Electricity Supply Emergency Code.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is awaiting final data returns from the November 2022 review of the Protected Sites List. There are currently at least 192 assets listed as hospitals. Applications for protected site status can be received by network operators at any time of the year, so the numbers of assets on the list can fluctuate.

## ■ Housing: Ellesmere Port and Neston

**Justin Madders:**

[\[105381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency that have had external wall insulation installed as of 31 October 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

BEIS estimates that under the [Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#) and [Green Homes Grant \(GHG\)](#) Government schemes, there have been around 100 external wall insulation measures installed in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency. Data for ECO covers January 2013 to September 2022. Data for the GHG schemes cover October 2020 to September 2022.

**Justin Madders:**[\[105385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the number of installations of energy efficiency measures in homes in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

**Graham Stuart:**

Improving the energy efficiency of the UK's housing stock is critical in supporting households and contributing to the Government's Net Zero target.

In particular, it is essential that the Government supports low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households with energy efficiency measures, making it easier to heat homes and contribute to the long-term reduction in energy bills. The latest fuel poverty statistics show that, in 2020, in Ellesmere Port and Neston 12.2% of households were in fuel poverty.

Measures are being delivered to fuel poor households through a range of schemes including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, the Home Upgrade Grant, the Local Authority Delivery Scheme and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). ECO has delivered 4,505 measures in Ellesmere Port and Neston as at end of September 2022.

**■ Housing: Feltham and Heston****Seema Malhotra:**[\[100984\]](#)

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

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is committed to improving the energy performance of homes across the country, including in Feltham and Heston.

The Government is already investing £6.6 billion over this parliament on decarbonising heat and energy efficiency measures.

The additional £6 billion of new Government funding, announced in the Autumn Statement, will be made available from 2025 to 2028.

**■ Housing: Heating****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[105471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish the Government response to the consultation entitled Phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in homes off the gas grid, published on 19 October 2021.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government will respond to that consultation in due course.

## ■ Housing: Wirral South

**Alison McGovern:**

[\[100951\]](#)

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

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is committed to improving the energy performance of homes across the country, including in Wirral South.

The Government is already investing £6.6 billion over this parliament on decarbonising heat and energy efficiency measures.

The additional £6 billion of new Government funding, announced in the Autumn Statement, will be made available from 2025 to 2028.

## ■ Hydrogen: Investment

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[105427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that all regions of the UK benefit from hydrogen investment.

**Graham Stuart:**

In the Energy Security Strategy, the Government doubled its ambition from 5GW to up to 10GW of low carbon production capacity by 2030, including a commitment to host yearly electrolytic allocation funding rounds for projects across the UK. Together with a clear policy and regulatory environment, the Government expects to mobilise over £9 billion of private investment in hydrogen production alone across all regions of the UK by 2030.

## ■ Hydrogen: Production

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[105426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the low-carbon hydrogen production pipeline develops outside of the UK's industrial clusters.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is aware of a potential pipeline of almost 20GW of projects across the UK in every corner of the Union. The Government launched the first joint Hydrogen Production Business Model and Net Zero Hydrogen Fund allocation round to support electrolytic projects across the UK this year, with the aim to award contracts in 2023. Transport and storage (T&S) will also be essential to grow the hydrogen economy, including outside of industrial clusters. Government will publish a response to its consultation on T&S business models next year.

## ■ Natural Gas: Hydrogen

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[105425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential role of hydrogen blending in supporting (a) investment in and (b) the scaling up of the hydrogen sector.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government intends to reach a decision in 2023 on whether to allow blending of up to 20% hydrogen (by volume) into gas distribution networks. Blending may help to bring forward investment and support early growth of the hydrogen economy. BEIS recently considered the potential value of blending through a consultation on hydrogen transport and storage infrastructure business models and regulation, and is currently reviewing the submitted responses. The Government is working with industry and regulators to assess the associated costs and risks of blending, which will need to be carefully managed if permitted.

## ■ Post Offices: ICT

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[105456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which legal firm will administer the Group Litigation Order compensation scheme for postmasters who helped expose the Post Office Horizon scandal; and whether that firm has previously advised the (a) Government and (b) Post Office.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Procurement of legal advisors will begin shortly. Firms with a conflict of interest will not be considered.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[105458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, from which budget funds for the Group Litigation Compensation scheme will be taken from.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The funds will be drawn from underspending in other Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy budgets or, if necessary, from the Reserve.

## ■ Postal Services: Fees and Charges

**Catherine West:**

[\[101761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November to Question 92302 on Postal Services: Fees and Charges, what assessment he has made of the (a) 46 per cent price increase of 1st class letter stamps since 2017; and (b) affordability of these services.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

As set out previously, the Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions which includes the price Royal Mail sets for First Class letters.



The Government is, however, committed to ensuring that the universal postal service remains affordable and accessible to all users. Ofcom sets the regulatory framework for stamp prices and whilst it does not currently regulate the price of First Class stamps, Ofcom does require that they, alongside all universal postal services, are affordable. Ofcom will be reviewing the appropriate scope and level of the safeguard caps with a statement and consultation in 2023-24.

## ■ **Postal Services: Standards**

**Catherine West:**

[\[101762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November to Question 92301 on Postal Services: Standards, what assessment he has made of the implications for customers of Ofcom's decision to retain the Christmas exemption period.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

As the independent regulator, it is for Ofcom to explain the decisions it takes on the regulatory framework. However, in coming to its decision to retain the exemption for the Christmas period, Ofcom carefully considered consultation responses including from consumer bodies. Ofcom will closely monitor Royal Mail's performance this Christmas, and it reserves the right to propose further action in this area if necessary.

**Catherine West:**

[\[101763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 29 November to Question 92300 on Postal Services: Standards, if he will outline the process required to change the statutory minimum requirements of the universal postal service, set out in the Postal Services Act 2011.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The minimum requirements of the universal postal service are set out in section 31 of the Postal Services Act 2011. Section 34(5) provides the Secretary of State with the power to amend section 31 by an order which is subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, requiring Parliamentary scrutiny and approval before becoming law.

Before the Secretary of State can amend section 31, Ofcom must either *review the extent to which the provision made by section 31 reflects the reasonable needs of the users of postal services provided in the United Kingdom* in accordance with s.34(1) or *review the extent (if any) of the financial burden for a universal service provider of complying with its universal service obligations* in accordance with s.44(1). The latter review may result in a report from Ofcom to the Secretary of State recommending a review under s.34(1).

## ■ **Renewable Energy: Wallasey**

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[101700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to increase funding for renewable energy sources in Wallasey constituency.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 7 December 2022]:* Grant funding for renewable innovation or community-based renewable schemes is open for both local authorities and private investors to bid for. The Contract for Difference scheme, the Government's main mechanism for supporting low carbon generation, is awarded through a competitive process, ensuring that the most cost-effective projects are supported regardless of their location. We encourage projects in Wallasey to apply.

**Small Businesses: Batley and Spen****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[101820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many SMEs in Batley and Spen constituency have received Government funding for support in 2022.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

Businesses in Batley and Spen will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, cut to fuel duty for 12 months, raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000 and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, to protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter. In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

Support is also available to SMEs across the UK through the Start Up loan scheme which has provided 148 SMEs in Batley and Spen loans to the value of £1,477,438 as of October 2022.

**Small Businesses: Ellesmere Port and Neston****Justin Madders:**[\[105382\]](#)

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

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

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

Businesses in Ellesmere Port and Neston will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average; the cut to fuel duty for 12 months; raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000 and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter. In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

The Government is also providing financial support through the Start Up loan scheme - 101 SMEs in Ellesmere Port and Neston have received loans to the value of £912,062 as of November 2022.

## ■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[105312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes have been upgraded to an Energy Performance Certificate level C through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, as of 24 November 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

This parliament, the Government has committed to investing £6.6bn in energy efficiency, with the Autumn Statement announcing an additional £6bn from 2025-2028.

SHDF Wave 1 awarded around £179m of grant funding, delivering from 2022 into 2023. Delivery is ongoing with data on the number of homes upgraded to EPC C expected to be published once post-delivery retrofit surveys are completed. The SHDF Wave 2.1 competition, which closed on 18th November 2022, will allocate up to £800m of grant funding, with successful projects likely to be notified in March 2023.

## ■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Sefton Central

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[105311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what type of energy efficiency measure was most frequently installed in homes in Sefton Central constituency through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, as of 24 November 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 awarded around £179m of grant funding, delivering from 2022 into 2023, of which £11m was awarded to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority consortium, including housing associations with homes in Sefton. The SHDF does not hold data on the most frequently installed Energy Efficiency measure in the Sefton Central Constituency.

## ■ Video Games: Competition

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[105580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Competition and Markets Authority on the potential merits of maintaining competition in the video games industry in the context of assessing Microsoft's proposed acquisition of Activision.

**Christine Jardine:**

[\[105581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Microsoft's proposed acquisition of

Activision on the UK's video games industry, including on independent video game developers.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Under competition law, responsibility for investigating the impact of mergers and acquisitions on competition falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's independent competition authority. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers and expertise to investigate the benefits and risks of mergers in relation to competition.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Civil Service: Secondment

**Julian Knight:**

[\[104268\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the benefits of civil service secondments to local government.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Secondments between the UK Civil Service and local authorities support Levelling Up and Places for Growth ambitions to provide career pathways and opportunities for people in regions across the UK. The benefits include:

- For individual secondees: career development opportunities; valuable immersive experience to develop knowledge, skills and understanding; way of building networks across sectors.
- For the organisations: means of sharing expertise to contribute to policy development or implementation and improve delivery of public services; option for retaining talented staff in the longer term.

The Cabinet Office is working closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to understand departmental demand for these secondments and to explore options to develop an approach to working with local authorities to develop a pipeline of secondments opportunities with the Civil Service.

### ■ Government Departments: Weather

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[105527\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether any cross-departmental (a) meetings and (b) other discussions on the UK's preparedness for cold weather during winter 2022-23 have taken place in the last six months.

**Jeremy Quin:**

As the coordinating department for severe weather events, the Cabinet Office undertakes a well-established programme of seasonal weather preparedness with departments and relevant agencies.

Preparation for Winter 2022-23 began in August with the revision of the relevant centrally-held cross-government severe weather response protocol, iterated in light of lessons learned from previous events (e.g. Storm Eunice) and other relevant developments (e.g. the formation of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)). The classified central protocol is co-owned by the Cabinet Office, the Met Office and UKHSA and aligns with the publicly available Cold Weather Plan for England (2022-23), published annually since 2011.

The relevant protocols are exercised every year and disseminated within the response community to ensure coordinated preparedness for winter weather risks and a coherent response should severe weather materialise.

The Cabinet Office remains in regular contact with UKHSA and the Met Office on possible deteriorating weather forecasts and to understand concurrent risks that may require adjustment of thresholds for a centrally-led government response.

UKHSA Cold Health Alerts and the Met Office National Severe Weather Warnings are issued for low temperatures and wintry hazards (respectively) - as is currently the case - sitting alongside targeted public communications outlined in the central protocol.

#### ■ **Weather: Death**

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[105519\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Office for National Statistics will release (a) provisional figures for excess winter mortality in England and Wales for 2020 to 2021 and (b) final figures for excess winter mortality in England and Wales for 2020 to 2021.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 7 December is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Excess winter mortality [UKSA\_Response\_to\_PQ105519.pdf]

#### ■ **Whitehall: Offices**

**Julian Knight:**

[\[104271\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent estimate his Department has made of office occupancy rates across the Whitehall estate.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The average number of staff working in Civil Service headquarter buildings is published weekly on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), with data going back to February 2022.

**DEFENCE**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Geraint Davies:**[\[902725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to update defence plans following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I have always been clear that Defence should be threat led. The Ministry of Defence is always adapting its plans in response to emerging threats and responding to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has been no different. We are sharing these learnings through updates to the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper in the new year.

**Sir John Whittingdale:**[\[902730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what defensive weaponry his Department is supplying to Ukraine.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

We have provided a range of weapons to Ukraine, including air defence systems with thousands of missiles to protect critical infrastructure, almost 100,000 artillery rounds, more than 10,000 anti-tank missiles, Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems and around three million rounds of small-arms ammunition. This financial year we expect to spend £2.3 billion on operations and support for Ukraine and we are prepared to deliver similar support next year.

**Simon Baynes:**[\[902731\]](#)

What recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Ukrainian defence against Russian forces.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Ukrainian forces remain tenacious and have inflicted heavy losses in their defence against Russia's illegal invasion. Its forces are better equipped, trained and have higher morale than their often tactically inept and incompetent enemy. Pressure by Ukrainian forces made Russia's occupation of the west side of the Dnipro River untenable, whereas Russian forces have only made incremental and costly gains against Ukrainian defences in the Donbas.

■ **Ammunition: Procurement****John Healey:**[\[105238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many ammunition rounds his Department receives from UK production in 2021.

**John Healey:**[\[105239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many ammunition rounds his Department received from UK production in each month of 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

Defence continues to contract with industry to maintain suitable stockpile levels. Over the last year this has included appropriate consideration of events in Ukraine.

It is not possible to comment on specific stockpile levels, as this information is operationally sensitive.

**■ Armed Forces: Health Services****Daisy Cooper:**[\[104384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many serving military personnel (a) are qualified paramedics and (b) meet the qualification requirements set out by the Health and Care Professions Council.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Armed Forces have 107 paramedics, of which 40 are confirmed as meeting the qualification requirements set out by the Health and Care Professions Council.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****John Healey:**[\[105231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of (a) mould and (b) damp have been reported in (i) Service Family Accommodation and (ii) Service Living Accommodation in each year since 2010.

**Alex Chalk:**

The information requested is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Defence has a robust damp and mould management process for Service Family Accommodation. No properties with reported issues will be allocated. If a damp or mould problem cannot be resolved quickly, if it is particularly severe or if a family member has a known vulnerability, families are offered alternative accommodation.

**Jerome Mayhew:**[\[902722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Defence Accommodation Strategy.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Following the publication of the Defence Accommodation Strategy, the single Services and other enabling organisations are drafting plans that will underpin the delivery of the Strategy's objectives in providing high-quality subsidised accommodation our Service personnel deserve. These plans will be refreshed annually, reported on quarterly and the single Services will be spending £1.6 billion over the next 10 years improving and building new Single Living Accommodation. Ongoing assessment of Armed Forces' personnel satisfaction will be front and centre in judging the success of the strategy and guiding future plans.

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[902728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the quality of housing accommodation for armed forces personnel.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) fully recognises that the provision of safe, good quality and well-maintained accommodation is essential to treating our people properly and as well as to operational output it remains one of the MOD's top priorities.

In the last seven years, MOD has invested more than £936 million in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) improvements and currently more than 98% of SFA meet or exceed the Government's Decent Homes Standard. However, we are looking to go further and the 2022-23 improvement programme is based on a funding level of £176 million which will also improve the thermal efficiency of homes.

## ■ **Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease**

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[103010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 70978 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, what criteria his Department uses to qualify a person at risk of Huntington's disease to be medically unfit to serve in the Armed Forces.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Joint Service Publication 950, Medical Policy, sets out the following criteria:

- Candidates known to be carriers of the gene associated with Huntington's disease are normally graded medically unfit for Service.
- Candidates with a proven, immediate family history of this condition are also normally graded medically unfit unless known not to carry the gene.

As stated in the answer to Question 70978, if there is clear evidence that a candidate is unlikely to develop Huntington's disease during a Service career then they may, on a case by case basis, be considered medically fit for service. It is for the candidate to provide this evidence, which must be supported by an appropriately qualified and experienced specialist.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[103012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 70978 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, when the ban for those at risk of developing Huntington's disease from serving in the Armed Forces was introduced.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

Huntington's disease was documented in the current format of occupational medical guidance, JSP 950 Leaflet 6-7-7 in August 2016. A similar position was taken in historical policy that pre-dates the current format.



**Luke Pollard:**

[\[103013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 70978 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, when the ban on those at risk of developing Huntington's disease from serving in the Armed Forces was last reviewed; and by whom.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

All of the medical employment standards for the Armed Forces, including those relating to Huntington's disease, are kept under periodic review. This considers a number of factors such as:

- The academic and clinical literature around the possible risks associated with the condition or presenting illness, and how that may impact military taskings.
- The risks of relapse and exacerbation of conditions or presenting clinical issues posed by the military environment and stressful taskings this may involve.
- The availability of medical support and evacuation capabilities on operations.

These areas are examined through academic reviews of the field, subject matter expert consultation and consensus. Careful consideration of these factors is the subject of regular reviews by a working group, consisting of military health professionals and military occupational physicians. The guidance with regards to Huntington's disease was last reviewed in August 2019.

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[103015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November to Question 70978 on Armed Forces: Huntington's Disease, how many people who applied to serve in the Armed Forces have been rejected because they were at risk of Huntington's disease in the last five years.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

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

## ■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

**John Healey:**

[\[104141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) in service and (b) out of service date for Stormer armoured vehicles.

**Alex Chalk:**

The requested information can be found below:

In service date - 1997

Out of service date - 2026

**■ AWACS**

**Chris Evans:** [\[105288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason there is a delay in the E-7 Wedgetail aircraft fleet reaching full operational capability.

**Alex Chalk:**

There have been several reasons behind delays to the E-7 Wedgetail schedule including the Covid-19 pandemic, and global supply chain and resourcing challenges affecting the aerospace and defence industries, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and a hurricane impacting the radar production facility.

The Ministry of Defence and Boeing are working closely to identify opportunities to minimise the delays, and the detailed schedule, including the Full Operating Capability, will be confirmed when the Full Business Case is finalised in mid-2023.

**■ AWACS: Costs**

**Chris Evans:** [\[105282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the whole life cost for the E-7 aircraft will be given the full operating capability of that aircraft has been delayed until 2024.

**Alex Chalk:**

I am withholding the information requested about the whole life cost for the E-7 aircraft as disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

**■ AWACS: Finance**

**Chris Evans:** [\[105285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the financial implications of delaying the full operating capability of the E7 Wedgetail aircraft to 2024.

**Alex Chalk:**

There are not expected to be any financial implications associated with delays in the E7 Wedgetail Programme.

**■ Boxer Vehicles: Procurement**

**John Healey:** [\[102783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December to Question 99720 on Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement and with reference to page 20 of the NAO report on the Equipment Plan 2022 to 2032, HC 907, published on 29 November, for what reason the figures for the number of Boxer vehicles differ.

**Alex Chalk:**

623 Boxer armoured vehicles have been ordered against a funded provision of 1,016. The 1,016 includes potential future variants which are being explored on a longer-term basis with allies and industry in line with the Land Industrial Strategy.

## ■ Defence Serious Crime Unit

**Sarah Atherton:**

[\[103043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) set up and (b) annual running costs of Victim and Witness Care Unit of the Defence Serious Crime Unit are; how many full-time equivalent staff will be allocated to that Unit; and what their salary costs will be.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

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

The cost to establish the Victim Witness Care Unit (VWCU) is £0.9 million. The annual cost of the VWCU is £0.5 million. The VWCU will report to the Chief of Staff of the DSCC and will include 12 full-time members of staff. Much of the day-to-day operating costs will be captured under the DSCC budget and will take some time to understand fully.

## ■ Defence: Technology

**Karl McCartney:**

[\[902724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help develop innovative defence technology.

**Greg Smith:**

[\[902729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to help develop innovative defence technology.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Defence works closely with UK industry and academia, including Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, to identify and invest in innovative technologies that address our most pressing capability challenges as well as publishing our future priorities to incentivise investment. We are transforming processes to drive this at pace. We are already testing and deploying these technologies.

## ■ F-35 Aircraft

**Chris Evans:**

[\[105290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans for the F35 aircraft to be in full operating capability.

**Alex Chalk:**

Full Operating Capability is expected to be declared in 2025.

## ■ Military Aid: Fire Services

**John Healey:**

[\[100891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has received a Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) request from the Home Office for Armed Forces personnel to cover for firefighters in the event of industrial action this winter.

**James Heapey:**

The Ministry of Defence received a request from the Home Office on 9 November to bolster the Fire and Rescue Service's contingency plans to maintain public services and minimise disruption in the event of any industrial action by Fire and Rescue staff. Defence has reviewed this request against longstanding MACA principles and has agreed to meet this request.

This will ensure the Fire and Rescue Service can maintain suitable level of service across England. Defence has received further MACA requests from the Home Office for additional personnel and is currently assessing the requests.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Indo-Pacific Region

**Liam Byrne:**

[\[99744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will set out his Department's forecast of (a) the total FTE and (b) the change in FTE staff deployed in the Indo-Pacific region, broken down by nation for each year in the next five-year period.

**James Heapey:**

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.

As of 8 December 22, there are a total of 1,297 Defence Personnel deployed in the Indo Pacific, not including the Global Network.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PERSONNEL
Pakistan	10
Indonesia	~5
Nepal	140
Brunei	840

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF PERSONNEL
BIOT (British Indian Ocean Territory)	35
Australia	20
Japan	85
Singapore	5
New Zealand	10
South Korea	50
Maritime – 2x OPVs on Defence Engagement tasks	105
Total	1,297[1]

There is no specific figure forecast to increase the total FTE in the next five-year period. Defence will ensure that increases in personnel are commensurate with our commitments to the region as set out in the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper.

[1] These figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in order to reflect the adaptive nature of Defence activity, however, the total figure represents the number of UK Defence Personnel deployed on the 8 December excluding those personnel working in Defence sections or as part of the global network.

## ■ Pinnacle Service Families

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

[\[101758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the performance of Pinnacle Service Families: and if he will seek the views of servicemen and women and their families at RAF Odiham.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has directed all three Future Defence Infrastructure Services Accommodation suppliers (Pinnacle, Amey and VIVO) to provide Rectification Plans as performance has been significantly below acceptable levels.

DIO, VIVO, Pinnacle and the RAF Odiham Welfare Team hold monthly meetings to identify concerns affecting Service personnel and their families. VIVO and Pinnacle also hold weekly Housing Clinics to enable families to raise issues directly with them.

## ■ Typhoon Aircraft

**Chris Evans:** [\[105283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to reassess the retirement of the Tranche 1 Typhoon in the upcoming revised Integrated Review in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Alex Chalk:**

Any specific defence policy or capability changes will be confirmed in the updated Defence Command Paper following the Integrated Review refresh.

On current planning the bulk of the Typhoon Tranche 1 aircraft will go out of service on 31 March 2025, whilst four will be retained until 2027. As the Tranche 1 fleet draws down, aircraft will undergo a Reduce To Produce programme to strip them of useable parts after which they will be sent for disposal action.

## ■ Ukraine: Antitank Missiles

**John Healey:** [\[104131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2022 to Question 154515 on Ukraine: Military Aid, how many anti-tank Javelin missiles have been successfully delivered to Ukraine since 25 April.

**James Heappey:**

In compiling the answer to this question we have noticed an error in the original answer to Question 154515. In correction, I can confirm that at 25 April 2022, 198 anti-tank Javelin missiles and 20 missile launchers had been successfully delivered to Ukraine.

To date, an additional 30 missile launchers have been delivered to Ukraine.

## ■ Ukraine: Military Aid

**Drew Hendry:** [\[104208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2022 to Question 37532 on Ukraine: Military Aid, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policy on the inclusion of training in the Murad Code within the training provided to Ukrainian defence personnel of the speech by the First Lady of Ukraine to Parliament on 29 November 2022.

**James Heappey:**

The Ministry of Defence recognises the important role that militaries can play in tackling and responding to Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV). At the FCDO Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) international conference on 28 November 2022, the MOD committed to reviewing how the Murad Code could be integrated into the work of UK Defence. There are important factors to consider when providing guidance to militaries with the Murad Code. These need to be sufficiently considered and understood to ensure that the most appropriate actor is collecting and handling evidence and information on CRSV in any given context and that there is no

risk of further harm to survivors. Specific training on the Murad Code is not currently being provided to Ukrainian defence personnel. Training provided to Ukrainian defence personnel through Operation INTERFLEX does include sessions on Human Security and the Law of Armed Conflict. Written information on dealing with Human Security issues, such as CRSV, is provided.

## ■ **Veterans: Pensions**

**Alan Brown:**

[\[104266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to support veterans living in countries that do not have a reciprocal uprating agreement with the UK and whose pensions are frozen.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

State Pensions are the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. It is up-rated where there is a legal requirement to do so, for example, where recipients are living in countries where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for up-rating. The Government has no plans to change the policy on up-rating UK State Pensions overseas; the policy is longstanding and has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years.

The Government understands that people move abroad for many reasons and that this can have an impact on their finances; up-ratings are based on levels of earnings growth and price inflation in the UK which have no direct relevance where the pensioner is resident overseas. The decision to move abroad remains a personal choice and advice has been provided to the public for many years that the UK State Pension is not up-rated overseas except where there is a legal requirement. However, in recognition of the unique nature and commitment of service life, military occupational pensions, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Guaranteed Income Payments and War Pension Scheme payments are paid and uprated every year, including for our veterans anywhere in the world, regardless of whether there is a reciprocal arrangement for the State Pension.

In addition, any veteran who has received a gratuity payment due to disablement resulting from service or is in receipt of a disablement pension under the War Pension Scheme can have the costs of treatment met where there is no free healthcare for that condition available in the country they reside.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ British Telecom: Billing****Kate Osborne:****[103066]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure that BT (a) refunds in full late payment charges incurred by customers because of delays caused by postal strikes in full and (b) issues an apology to such customers.

**Julia Lopez:**

BT customers who have incurred late payment charges should contact BT customer service to discuss and resolve any issues that the postal strikes may have caused.

Ofcom, the independent telecoms regulator, requires all communication providers to be members of an approved independent Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme, which can assist in settling complaints. BT has signed up to the Communications Ombudsman service, which is free for consumers:

<https://www.ombudsman-services.org/sectors/communications>

**■ Cricket: Bullying****Navendu Mishra:****[105572]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of bullying in cricket in England.

**Stuart Andrew:**

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

National Governing Bodies (NGBs) such as the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) 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.

Where allegations about inappropriate or harmful behaviour such as bullying are made, these must be taken seriously. There is no place for abuse of any kind in sport and anyone responsible for such behaviour must be held accountable.

All NGBs and sporting organisations in receipt of public money must abide by the requirements of the Code for Sports Governance - including the ECB. The code is clear that sports need to ensure that their systems to deal with grievances and disputes are transparent and robust. We remain committed to working with the sports sector to help ensure the safety of all participants in sport.

**■ Sports: Drugs****Jim Shannon:****[105341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle the use of illicit substances in sport in the UK.



**Stuart Andrew:**

Clean sport is a shared responsibility and one in which UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), sport and government work together. UKAD is the UK's national anti-doping organisation and an arm's length body of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). DCMS and UKAD share the common objective of promoting and protecting clean sport through education, testing and enforcement. UKAD works with athletes and national sports bodies to ensure compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code, primarily through implementing the government's National Anti-Doping Policy.

**Starlink: Broadband****Chi Onwurah:**[\[105292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether a (a) procurement process was conducted and (b) contract has been signed for Starlink satellite internet constellation to provide the 3,000 low-Earth orbit small satellites to help very hard to reach places access broadband; and for what reasons OneWeb in which the Government owns an interest has not been included in the trial.

**Julia Lopez:**

The trials will assess the technological capability of, and end-user response to, new low latency Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite platforms across an expected maximum of 15 locations. The decision to use Starlink equipment for the first four sites, which are located in National Parks, was based on the immediate availability of equipment, user need and the requirement to use unobstructive antenna of a size appropriate to the locations.

All commercial decisions related to these trials have been, and will be, taken in accordance with the Department's commercial purchasing guidelines, ensuring that the Government does not show undue favour to any single supplier. As previously announced, DCMS remains in discussion with OneWeb on how they might contribute to trials at larger and more complex sites in future, with the expectation that both Starlink and OneWeb systems will be tested as part of this trial.

**Theatres: Investment****Barbara Keeley:**[\[105318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of Arts Council England's 2023-26 Investment Programme on the number of producing theatres in England.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Many theatre organisations based in buildings present a mixture of their own produced work, work that they have co-produced with other partners (either another theatre building or a theatre company), and work that they 'buy in', which they are not directly involved in making. As well as theatre organisations based in buildings, there are producing theatre companies which do not own or lease a building but which make theatre which is then presented in a network of theatres around the country.

Given this mixed ecology, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive assessment using the definition of “producing theatres”.

The data shows that investment in theatre and the number of theatre organisations supported have both increased in the Arts Council England 2023–26 Investment Programme (although some organisations may have changed discipline classification between 2018–22 and 2023–26).

In the 2023–26 portfolio Arts Council England has maintained investment in theatres such as Live Theatre in Newcastle – a significant investor in new writing. Arts Council England has also maintained investment in many producing theatres outside the capital, including Sheffield’s Royal Exchange, Bristol Old Vic, Birmingham Rep, and more – and has increased investment in the Royal Court in Liverpool and Coventry’s Belgrade Theatre.

### ■ Video Games: Research

**Matt Western:** [\[102915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what grants for research and development are available to video game developers in the UK.

**Matt Western:** [\[102916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what grants are available for video games developers seeking to export overseas.

**Matt Western:** [\[102917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what Government schemes are available to video game development studios wishing to (a) recruit, (b) employ and (c) train university graduates.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is committed to supporting the growth of the UK’s video games sector which brings economic, cultural and social benefits across the UK.

This Government is investing over £100 million to support research and development across the creative industries, which video games developers are able to apply for. This funding supports groundbreaking programmes including Innovate UK’s £30 million for the Creative Catalyst Programme and the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s £75.6 million CoSTAR programme. Video games developers are able to apply for funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) via Innovate UK competitions, and through the upcoming digital twinning research investments from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

The Government’s Export Strategy sets out financial support for exporters, including video games developers. The Internationalisation Fund provides co-investment to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with high international growth potential. The Government also provides support at two leading global video games trade shows, Gamescom in Cologne and Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, which enables UK games exporters to engage with potential investors. Financial

support is also available to eligible businesses wishing to attend or exhibit at trade shows through the UK Tradeshow Programme pilot.

This Government is working with industry to deliver a new generation of highly skilled workers, and will articulate these plans as part of the upcoming Creative Industries Sector Vision. For video games, the £8 million expansion of the UK Games Fund is providing valuable support to early stage games development businesses and talented graduates throughout the UK. This includes its Tranzfuser programme which mentors teams of talented and entrepreneurial graduates in regional hubs across the UK.

## EDUCATION

### ■ **Children (Protection At Work) Regulations 1998**

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[105307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans she has to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Children (Protection at Work) Regulations 1998.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is responsible for a very small number of pieces of Retained EU Law (REUL) and is working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to support the passage through Parliament of the REUL (Revocation and Reform) Bill and the associated BEIS-led programme of REUL repeal and reform.

The department is in the process of analysing and assessing what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed or amended. In doing so we will ensure that children continue to be safeguarded in employment.

### ■ **Department for Education: Trade Unions**

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[101800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times (a) Ministers and (b) officials from her Department met representatives of the (i) National Education Union, (ii) NASUWT, (iii) Association of School and College Leaders and (iv) National Association of Head Teachers since 25 October 2022.

**Nick Gibb:**

Department officials and Ministers continue to meet regularly with unions and other representative bodies to discuss a wide range of school and college policy issues.

## ■ Further Education: Finance

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[101799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 5.64 of the Autumn Statement, whether Sir Michael Barber has been asked to provide an assessment of the adequacy of funding for further education colleges.

**Robert Halfon:**

Sir Michael Barber has been appointed to provide private advice to my right hon. Friends, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education, on the implementation of the department's current skills reforms programme. As part of those reforms, the department is investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over the Parliament, to ensure people can access high-quality education and training, including T Levels, that lead to good jobs.

## ■ Older Workers: Training

**Andrea Leadsom:**

[\[105295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure provision of skills-based employment training for employees aged over 60; and if he will make a statement.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is delivering several skills offers, such as Skills Bootcamps and Free Courses for Jobs, that can help upskill employed learners to access further opportunities. These are supported by an investment of £1.6 billion through the National Skills Fund across 2022 to 2025, which includes investment of up to £550 million to significantly expand Skills Bootcamps, and investment to expand the eligibility for delivery of the Free Courses for Jobs offer, which is now open to more adults.

Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, available to adults in England, including employed learners aged 60 and over, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills, with an offer of a job interview on completion. There are now more than 900 Skills Bootcamps available across the country, offering training in digital, technical (including engineering and manufacturing), construction, logistics (HGV driving), and skills that support the green economy (including heat pump engineering, electric vehicle maintenance and repair, and zero carbon construction).

The department also funds Free Courses for Jobs offer of over 400 Level 3 qualifications in sector subject areas such as engineering, social care and accounting, for adults in England including employed learners aged 60 and over. Adults are eligible if they do not hold an existing full level 3 qualification, if they are unemployed, or if they earn under the National Living Wage.

## ■ Primary Education: Mental Health Services

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[101784]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many primary schools in England employ a (a) play or (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 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: Meat Products

**Dan Carden:**

**[105530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing the requirement to serve meat three times a week from the School Food Standards.

**Nick Gibb:**

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

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

## ■ Teachers: Training

**Munira Wilson:**

**[105587]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to announce the results of appeals made by initial teaching training providers who were unsuccessful in her Department's reaccreditation process.

**Nick Gibb:**

On 8 December 2022, the Department informed initial teacher training (ITT) providers who had appealed following the decision in the recent application process not to award them accredited status to deliver reformed ITT from the 2024/25 academic year, of the outcomes of their appeals.

**■ Training: Sizewell C Power Station****Tom Hunt:**[\[101795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessments her Department has made regarding the adequacy of skills training opportunities in the local labour market to support the Sizewell C nuclear power plant project.

**Robert Halfon:**

The new Local Skills Improvement Plans bring together employers, skills providers and other local stakeholders to identify the key skills needed in an area and to determine the changes required to local skills provision. For the Norfolk and Suffolk area, the Secretary of State for Education designated the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce to lead the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

At a national level, the Green Jobs Delivery Group, which brings together representatives from government, business, industry, trade unions and academia, is the key vehicle for achieving our green skills aims and is examining nuclear skills needs.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has approved five apprenticeship standards for the nuclear industry, with another in development. The Free Courses for Jobs offer includes the ECITB level 3 Certificate and Diploma in Nuclear Engineering and Science.

Skills Bootcamps are short, flexible courses designed to meet the needs of employers. In addition to the national Skills Bootcamp offer, New Anglia LEP, in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, is using Department for Education grant funding to run Skills Bootcamps that meet local needs. Some of these new skills, such as construction, are valuable for the development of Sizewell C. It is expected that the Skills Bootcamp offer will develop as the Sizewell C project progresses.

**■ Vocational Education: Homelessness****Steve McCabe:**[\[102764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help homeless young people access vocational courses.

**Robert Halfon:**

Students and young people participating in vocational education or training that are homeless may access a range of financial support to help them to participate.

Students aged 16-19, or aged up to 25 with an education, health and care (EHC) plan may be able to receive support from the 16-19 Bursary Fund. This supports financially disadvantaged students, helping them remain in education or training, and supports them in meeting costs associated with studying, such as travel, books, equipment, and trips. In the 2022/23 academic year the department allocated nearly £144 million for institutions to help these students. In addition, the department has made available Bursary Funds of over £21 million for vulnerable 16–19-year-old students (such as those who are in care, care leavers and those who are supporting themselves and claiming benefits). The department has also made over £31 million available for free meals in further education, as well as childcare and residential support where needed.

The department wants more young people to benefit from apprenticeships that offer high quality training and opportunities for progression. The department is increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 and continuing to offer £1,000 payments to employers when they hire apprentices aged 16 to 18, or those aged 19 to 24 who are care leavers or have an EHC plan.

The Adult Education Budget (AEB), worth £1.34 billion in the 2022/23 academic year, fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

The AEB includes funding to enable colleges and providers to help adult learners, including those who are homeless, to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support for learners aged over 19 with a specific financial hardship, where providers have discretion to help learners meet the costs associated with studying. Learning Support also enables colleges and training providers to meet the additional needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and meet the costs of reasonable adjustments as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Learning Support can cover a range of needs including an assessment for dyslexia, funding to pay for specialist equipment or helpers, and arranging signers or note takers.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Animal Welfare

**Sir Stephen Timms:**

**[92070]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how she plans to implement the (a) review of the use of cages, (b) introduction of animal welfare labelling for food and (c) other commitments of her Department's Action Plan for Animal Welfare; and if she will make a statement.

**Mark Spencer:**

Animal welfare is an important issue, and we are committed to strengthening standards and protections through our Action Plan for Animal Welfare which sets out our vision for a wide range of ambitious improvements.

We are committed to exploring the phasing out of confinement systems. Decisions on the timing of public consultation around this issue must be carefully considered in light of wider challenges Britain's farmers are currently facing.

Last year we ran an extensive call for evidence on the impacts, costs and deliverability of food labelling for animal welfare as part of our work on the new Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. Based on the evidence provided, and as announced in our Food Strategy, we plan to consult on reforming mandatory labelling for animal welfare, and proposals are being co-developed with partners across the supply chain.

We continue to drive forward our animal welfare agenda through legislation as Parliamentary time allows, and through non-legislative reforms.

**■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control****Andrew Rosindell:****[80645]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to combat avian flu in the wild bird population.

**Mark Spencer:**

Unprecedented outbreaks of avian influenza are being seen across the UK, Europe and North America in both kept and wild birds. We recognise the significant threat highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is posing to wild birds, and in particular our seabird populations and it is deeply saddening to see the impact this is having on these important species.

Defra's disease control measures seek to contain the number of animals that need to be culled, either for disease control purposes or to safeguard animal welfare. Our approach aims to reduce adverse impacts on the rural and wider economy, the public, rural communities and the environment (including impact on wildlife), whilst protecting public health and minimising the overall cost of any outbreak.

On the 31 August 2022, Defra and the Welsh Government published the [Mitigation strategy for avian influenza in wild birds in England and Wales](#) which supports our [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) and contains guidance to support land managers and ornithologists in mitigating the impact of avian influenza in wild birds. While this Strategy is applicable to England and Wales, all four UK administrations work closely together with the aim of providing, where possible, a consistent and coordinated response to disease prevention, mitigation, and control across the UK.

Expert advice is sought by the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and animal health policy officials through the Ornithology Expert Panel (OEP) which includes



representatives from BTO, WWT, RSPB and JNCC and from the National Experts Group (NEG). In addition, Defra and the Welsh Government have commissioned JNCC to establish an Avian Influenza Wild Bird Recovery Advisory Group. The group will gather information from conservation, land management and wildlife disease experts from a range of organisations to assess what further conservation and monitoring actions can be implemented with respect to wild birds. Drawing on this, we will work with Natural England as well as key external organisations to develop and implement appropriate actions to support the recovery of vulnerable bird populations in England.

## ■ Biodiversity

**Henry Smith:**

[\[101707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she plans to take to implement the Global Biodiversity Framework.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In England, we have already committed to setting a target to halt the decline in species by 2030, in addition to at least one long-term target for biodiversity. Following agreement of the Global Biodiversity Framework at CBD COP 15 we will be setting out our approach to implementing the framework domestically in our Environmental Improvement Plan, due to be published in 2023. The Plan will set out our ambitions and approach to nature recovery, including our legally binding targets and the actions that will drive us towards reaching them.

## ■ Dogs: Animal Breeding

**Beth Winter:**

[\[101807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of canine fertility clinics operating in the UK.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[101808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with the (a) RSPCA, (b) British Veterinary Association, (c) Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on regulating canine fertility clinics.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[101809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the regulation of canine fertility clinics.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, only veterinary surgeons are permitted to perform canine artificial insemination. Any non-vet undertaking canine artificial insemination, including the taking of blood samples, is therefore in breach of the Act.

My Department has not made an estimation of the number of canine fertility clinics operating in the UK and Ministers have not had recent discussions with the RSPCA,

the British Veterinary Association or the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on this specific matter. However, the Department is aware of this issue and takes the matter very seriously. Where breaches of legislation have been identified, enforcement action, including the successful prosecution of individuals, has been taken by Defra Investigation Services; where appropriate, this is in collaboration with local authorities.

If a member of the public has any concerns for the operation of a canine fertility clinic they should contact the relevant local authority who has responsibilities for enforcement under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

## ■ Farms: Tenants

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[98798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to implement the recommendation in the report by the Tenancy Working Group entitled The Rock Review, published on 13 October 2022, on establishing a new Directorate within her Department with responsibility for (a) agricultural tenancies and (b) other land occupation issues.

**Mark Spencer:**

A diverse and vibrant tenanted sector is vital to the future of agriculture, and we want all types of farmers and other land managers, including tenants, to get involved with the new schemes. That's why government commissioned the Rock Review, and we are now considering over 70 recommendations.

We have already implemented some of the recommendations, including designing the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme to be accessible to tenants, including those with shorter term agreements.

## ■ Food: Labelling

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[104160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to (a) reform, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Food Information Regulations 2014.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its retained EU law to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Bill, including in relation to the Food Information Regulations 2014. We remain committed to maintaining our world leading standards of food safety and quality.

## ■ **Hen Harriers: Conservation**

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly:**

[\[104130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to Answer of 15 January 2021 to Question 133641 on Hen Harriers, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of the effectiveness of hen harrier nests on non-RSPB nature reserves in comparison to RSPB nature reserves; and whether she has made an assessment of the reasons why nests were more successful in non-RSPB nature reserves.

**Trudy Harrison:**

No specific assessment of the effectiveness of our hen harrier recovery policies based on the ownership of land has been made.

## ■ **Hill Farming**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[104152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the value of upland farming to (a) sustainability goals and (b) the economy.

**Mark Spencer:**

The uplands contain some of the most beautiful and diverse wildlife in the England and upland farmers play a vital role as stewards of the countryside, providing many environmental benefits and ecosystem services, including clean air and water, carbon sequestration, water quality and flood risk management – whilst helping to maintain our most iconic landscapes.

## ■ **Hill Farming: Subsidies**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[104149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of changes to the rate of Basic Payments to upland farmers on those farmers' businesses.

**Mark Spencer:**

In October 2021, the Government published the Agriculture in the UK Evidence Pack. This publication included static analysis showing the profitability of farms in the absence of Direct Payments for the years immediately prior to the start of the agricultural transition. In 2019 the Government published the farming evidence compendium. This publication provided an in-depth assessment of the impacts of removing Direct Payments with analysis by sector, location in England and type of land tenure. This publication also provided analysis on how farm businesses, across all sectors, can offset the impact of Direct Payments.

We are helping farmers, including those in the uplands, to navigate the agricultural transition. For example, we are now paying Direct Payments in two instalments each year for the remainder of the agricultural transition period, to help farmers with their

cashflow, giving farm businesses an advance injection of cash. It will not affect farm profitability, but we are hoping it will help farmers to make business decisions with more confidence.

### ■ Hill Farming: Sustainable Farming Incentive

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[104150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of support for upland farmers moving to the Sustainable Farming Incentive.

**Mark Spencer:**

We are rolling the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme out over time. The first step of that roll out includes the Moorland Standard. We have worked regularly with a group of stakeholders, including farmers and practitioners, to develop that Standard within the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme. This standard has the sole focus on, and eligibility for land mapped above the moorland line in the uplands of England. It forms an integral part of the offer for those farming in the uplands alongside the other elements of the scheme they may also be eligible for.

We will continue to expand Sustainable Farming Incentive so that upland farmers are able to access funding for a wide range of activities so that they can maintain sustainable farm businesses which deliver for food, farming and the environment.

As we roll out the Sustainable Farming Incentive offer, upland farmers will continue to benefit from the Countryside Stewardship scheme, and the legacy Environmental Stewardship offer. In combination, alongside the grants we offer, free business advice and targeted innovation funding, upland farmers have access to a range of offers to invest in their businesses.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[104151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Sustainable Farming Incentive for upland farmers with non-improved grassland.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Low and no Input Grassland standard is currently being piloted for SFI and will support farmers to sustainably manage their low and no input grasslands to benefit wildlife, including pollinators, by protecting existing quality habitat and improving the diversity of other grasslands.

Our current indicative date for the introduction of the Low and no Input Grassland standard into the live scheme is 2024. We will publish more details in due course.

## ■ Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[101722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether she plans to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (2019).

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is in the process of analysing its REUL stock and determining what should be preserved as part of domestic law, as well as REUL that should be repealed, or amended. In reviewing retained EU law, Defra's aim is to ensure that UK law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure our regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK. Defra take biosecurity very seriously and is committed to maintaining the UK's high standards and ambitions.

## ■ Plants: Non-native Species

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[100932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the definition of non-native species in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, how many Species Control Agreements and Species Control Orders have (a) been issued by environmental authorities in England since the Infrastructure Act 2015 came into force and (b) specifically relate to control of *Rhododendron ponticum*.

**Trudy Harrison:**

There have been no Species Control Agreements or Species Control Orders issued by environmental authorities in England since the Infrastructure Act 2015 came into force and therefore none specifically related to the control of *Rhododendron ponticum*.

These provisions are used primarily to remove newly arrived invasive non-native species or species that currently have a relatively restricted distribution but have the potential to become more widely spread. In general, it would not be an appropriate use of these powers or an effective use of resources to seek to apply these provisions to invasive non-native species that are already widespread.

## ■ Wash Fishery Order 1992

**James Wild:**

[\[97777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential effect of the proposal to replace the Wash Fishery Order 1992 made by Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority on the viability of the fishing fleet.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is currently considering the application made by the Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (EIFCA), the body responsible for fisheries management

in the area. The intended effect of the proposal is to ensure that the aquaculture and wild capture fisheries continue to be regulated, a role undertaken by the EIFCA.

**James Wild:** [\[97788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has received representations on the extension of the Wash Fishery Order 1992.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra has received a letter requesting the extension of the Wash Fishery Order 1992. Once an Order is made, its duration cannot be subsequently extended without repeating the full application process.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Afghanistan: International Cooperation

**Catherine West:** [\[105362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with regional partners on international engagement with Afghanistan over the next five years.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK continues to play a leading role to coordinate the international response to Afghanistan, including with the region. We intend to establish a diplomatic presence in Kabul when the security and political situation in the country allows and are coordinating this effort with allies. We remain committed to the Afghan people and will continue to advocate on their behalf in all our international engagement.

### ■ Africa and Asia: Hunting

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[98686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support Commonwealth nations with preventing trophy hunting in (a) Asia and (b) Africa.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Trophy hunting takes place lawfully in many countries around the world, including Commonwealth countries. Decisions on the legality and standards of trophy hunting are made by national or local governments. HM Government has pledged to ban the imports of hunting trophies from thousands of species. We are committed to a ban that is among the strongest in the world and leads the way in protecting endangered animals. We are supporting the Private Member's Bill led by the hon. Member for Crawley that will deliver this.

A number of official development assistance programmes are working in Africa, including the UK's Darwin Initiative, which aims to deliver on biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction; the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund to counter illegal wildlife trade in animals and plants; and the UK's £100 million Biodiverse Landscape

Fund, which will protect biodiversity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support sustainable livelihoods. We are not aware of any other direct support HM Government is providing to Commonwealth countries to prevent trophy hunting.

#### ■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Deportation**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[98679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many trespassers have been evicted from the British Indian Overseas Territory (Chagos Islands) in each of the last 10 years.

**David Rutley:**

The BIOT Administration is committed to tackling any illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing within the Marine Protected Area. According to available records, this has led to the successful criminal prosecution of 25 masters/ owners of vessels for such activity since 2014. Upon a successful prosecution the masters and their crews are served with removal orders to leave the Territory, and there have been 25 of these issued since 2014 to masters of their vessels and their crews. Prosecutions were brought under The British Indian Ocean Territory Fisheries (Conservation and Management) Ordinance 2007.

#### ■ **Cyprus: Sovereignty**

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[105321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to progress a comprehensive final Cyprus Settlement.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN efforts to reach a Cyprus settlement. The UK actively engages with all parties on this. The Foreign Secretary met Cypriot Foreign Minister Kasoulides on 15 November and stressed our commitment to work towards a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus settlement process. We support the UN led process and advocate a solution in line with UN parameters based on the model of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality.

#### ■ **Development Aid**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[105359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish the imputed UK share of multilateral net Official Development Assistance for the 2021 calendar year.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The imputed UK shares of multilateral net Official Development Assistance (ODA) calculation relies on multilateral organisations' disbursement data which is published by the OECD and has not yet been published for the 2021 calendar year.

FCDO will pre-announce the publication date on the statistics page of GOV.UK in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

## ■ Food Supply

**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[104459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to help improve food security around the world.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Sustainable food security remains a priority of our humanitarian and development work and is a key objective of our International Development Strategy.

The UK is working with our international partners to address the underlying causes of food insecurity; promote robust food systems in low-income countries and support life-saving action in famine risk areas.

We are also taking action to enhance the coherence of the international response, including through a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable. Further detail is set out in the Government's recent response to the International Development Committee's inquiry into food security.

[<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmintdev/767/report.html>]

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Ministerial Boxes

**Mr David Lammy:** [\[104110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many ministerial red boxes his Department has bought in the last ten years.

**David Rutley:**

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

## ■ Harem Rafat Fatah

**Hilary Benn:** [\[100896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the reported detention of Harem Rafat Fatah in the Kurdish region of Iraq.

**David Rutley:**

We are aware of the reported detention of Harem Rafat Fatah in the Kurdish region of Iraq and have assessed that it does not imply changes to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office policies. The UK is a vocal supporter of human rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This includes supporting a timely investigation and a fair trial for all suspects. Where we have concerns about due process or human rights we raise these with senior members of the Kurdistan Regional Government.



## ■ India: Foreign Relations

**Catherine West:**

[\[102954\]](#)

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 India.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK-India relationship is going from strength to strength, with the *India-UK 2030 Roadmap* continuing to set a positive trajectory for UK-India relations: trade, and defence and security form two of the five pillars of that agreement. We are working towards an ambitious and balanced FTA and will only sign when we have a deal that is in the best interests of the British people and the economy. We are working to tackle joint challenges in cyber, space, crime and terrorism while also working together to deliver advanced security capabilities through joint research, co-design, co-development and joint production of defence technology and systems.

## ■ Indo-pacific Region: Disinformation

**Catherine West:**

[\[105361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Indo-Pacific on disinformation in the region.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Foreign Secretary has reaffirmed the UK focus on the Indo-Pacific and the importance the UK places on deepening engagement across the region. The Foreign Secretary speaks regularly to his Indo-Pacific counterparts on a full range of foreign and security policy issues.

## ■ Iran: al Qaeda

**Mark Jenkinson:**

[\[95934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the relationship between Iran and al-Qaeda on UK security interests.

**David Rutley:**

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters. The UK Government closely follows the security situation in Iran and maintains a regular dialogue with international counterparts on this.

## ■ Iran: Detainees

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[97458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the consequences for his policies of the letter to

the Iranian Judiciary from Iranian parliamentarians urging severe punishments for detained protesters.

**David Rutley:**

The sentencing to death of protestors in Iran is abhorrent. I condemned this tragic development in the House on 16 November. The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and will challenge the Iranian regime's violent response to protests. On 14 November, the UK sanctioned 24 individuals for violations of human rights in the repression of protests. This is on top of sanctions on 10 October against Iran's so called "morality police" and seven security officials. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful Human Rights Council resolution to establish a UN investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations during the protests.

■ **Iran: Human Rights**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[101019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to (a) identify and (b) prevent human rights violations of the Baluch people in Iran.

**David Rutley:**

We condemn the killing and detention of Baluchi leaders calling for equal rights and an end to repression in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. We continue to raise human rights with the regime at every appropriate opportunity, both directly and in multilateral fora. On 14 November, the UK sanctioned 24 individuals for violations of human rights in the repression of protests. This is on top of sanctions on 10 October against Iran's so called 'morality police'. At a Special Session of the Human Rights Council on 24 November, the UK and our partners secured the establishment of an investigative mechanism into the regime's response to protests and their subsequent continued human rights abuses. The UK will work with our partners to ensure this delivers for the people of Iran.

■ **Iran: UN Commission on the Status of Women**

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[105330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will set out the Government's position on the forthcoming vote in the United Nations on Iran's membership of the Commission on the Status of Women.

**David Rutley:**

Through its actions, words and repression of women's rights, Iran has proven it is not fit to sit on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The UK fully supports the United States' proposal to seek Iran's removal from the CSW, and will do what we can, together with our partners, in support of this. On 24 November, the UK supported a successful Human Rights Council resolution to establish a UN investigation into the regime's appalling human rights violations during the protests.

**■ Omar Radi****Afzal Khan:**[\[102983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with the Government of Morocco on the imprisonment of Omar Radi.

**David Rutley:**

We are aware of and continue to monitor the case of Omar Radi and senior UK officials raised his case with the Moroccan Government on 1 December. Support for human rights is a priority around the world and we regularly raise human rights issues with the Moroccan authorities, including individual cases.

**■ South Africa: Females****Ruth Jones:**[\[104339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Southern African Development Community countries on advancing gender equality.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Gender equality is a priority for this Government as demonstrated by its commitment to Women and Girls, including twelve years of quality education and the recent UK-hosted Conference Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. All Ministers with responsibility for development, including the Foreign Secretary, raise these issues with their Southern Africa Development Community counterparts. For example, in October, the Foreign Secretary raised preventing sexual violence in conflict with the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo and in November, the State Visit of the President of South Africa was used to highlight the UK-South Africa partnership on gender equality.

**■ Vladimir Kara-Murza****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[105468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on the detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Foreign Secretary has emphasised his determination to continue raising Vladimir Kara-Murza's case internationally, including in a meeting with Mr Kara-Murza's wife in May, in his previous role as Minister for Europe. To this end, UK Ambassadors have raised Mr Kara-Murza's case with the UN and at the OSCE. British Embassy officials have attended his court hearings with other international partners, the last hearing being 24 October. We condemn the politically motivated sentencing of Mr Kara-Murza, and of all those who speak out against Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **Alopecia****Jim Shannon:**[\[104147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with alopecia in each of the last 3 years.

**Helen Whately:**

This information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance****Jim Shannon:**[\[105387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to hold discussions with representatives of people with (a) cystic fibrosis and (b) other people likely to be disproportionately affected by antimicrobial resistance on the development of the next five-year antimicrobial resistance action plan.

**Maria Caulfield:**

On 23 November 2022, we launched a call for evidence to inform the development of the national action plan for anti-microbial resistance for 2024 to 2029. The call for evidence is aimed at stakeholders, including patient groups and representatives and will be open until 20 January 2023. In addition to the call for evidence, the national action plan will be developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders and we are considering how we can engage with patient representatives and interest groups.

■ **Asthma: Drugs****Jim Shannon:**[\[104145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential correlation between the capacity in the severe asthma centre network and levels of uptake of severe asthma biologics in England.

**Helen Whately:**

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. NHS England's severe asthma collaborative is developing the capacity in severe asthma centres to streamline patient pathways for biologic therapy and reduce variation in prescribing and patient management. A toolkit has been produced to support clinical teams.

■ **Autism and Learning Disability: Affordable Housing****Barbara Keeley:**[\[104117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many housing units have been provided through the Affordable Housing Programme and Care Specialist Support Housing Fund for people with (a) learning disabilities and (b) autistic people in each of the last three years.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* This information is not held in the format requested.

In 2019/20, 50 units were completed for adults with learning disabilities and autistic people under the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund, with 17 completed in 2020/21 and 26 in 2021/22. As of March 2022, the Affordable Homes Programme has delivered over 6,600 grant funded specialist or supported homes.

**■ Autism and Learning Disability: Children****Barbara Keeley:**[\[104116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of (a) autistic children and (b) children with learning disabilities in inpatient units.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* The 'Building the Right Support Action Plan', published 14 July 2022, sets out actions to reduce reliance on inpatient care by strengthening community support. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to ensuring children and young people with a learning disability and autistic children with the most complex needs will have a designated keyworker by 2023/24. The keyworker programme was developed and tested in 13 pilot sites and the service is now operational in 26 integrated care boards. By March 2023, there will be a keyworker service in all areas.

**■ Autism and Learning Disability: Offenders****Barbara Keeley:**[\[104115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on the potential merits of providing specific preventative support for (a) people with learning disabilities and (b) autistic people who are at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care regularly discusses a range of issues with Cabinet colleagues. The Building the Right Support Action Plan, published 14 July 2022, includes actions to reduce the number of those with a learning disability and autistic people in inpatient care under Part III of the Mental Health Act 1983 and to improve support for people at all stages of the criminal justice system. The Ministry of Justice is working with NHS England to understand the role of liaison and diversion services in the initial stages of the criminal justice pathway.

Under the proposed Mental Health Act reforms, commissioners will have a duty to ensure there is an understanding of the risk of crisis of individuals in the area and there are sufficient community-based services for those with a learning disability and autistic people at risk of admission under Part II of the Act.

## ■ Autism and Learning Disability: Social Services

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[104114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the (a) spend and (b) development of appropriate community services under the Building the Right Support Action Plan.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* The Building the Right Support Delivery Board is responsible for monitoring the commitments made in the Action Plan. In 2022/23, we are providing an additional £90 million to develop community support and for discharge for those with a learning disability and autistic people, including £21 million for the Community Discharge Grant.

NHS England provides guidance, support and investment to local areas to commission community services for those with a learning disability and autistic people in line with Building the Right Support and the national service model. NHS England continues to work with other organisations to ensure appropriate plans are in place for this investment. The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has established a task and finish group to review how national oversight of National Health Service and local authority spending related to Building the Right Support can be improved.

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[104118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 3 of the Care Quality Commission report Out of Sight – who cares? Restraint, segregation and seclusion review, what steps he is taking to increase the number and quality of community teams to support (a) autistic people and (b) people with learning disabilities.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* In 2022/23, £40 million has been invested to improve the capacity and capability of seven days a week specialist multidisciplinary and crisis support for autistic people and those with a learning disability. We have also provided £30 million for keyworkers for children and young people with the most complex needs.

We continue to support local areas in the delivery of Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews and dynamic support registers to ensure the appropriate support is available for children, young people and their families in the community. NHS England will publish refreshed guidance in 2022/23.

## ■ Cancer: Health Services

**Martyn Day:**

[\[101752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide updated timings for the publication of the 10 Year Cancer Plan; and what measures that plan will include on pancreatic cancer.

**Helen Whately:**

Following the call for evidence for a 10 year cancer plan earlier this year, we received over 5,000 submissions. We are currently reviewing these responses.

■ **Carers****Dan Carden:**[\[105539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an estimate of the potential merits of introducing training for NHS frontline staff to (a) identify, (b) signpost and (c) support unpaid carers.

**Helen Whately:**

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Cavernous Sinus Thrombosis****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[105242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November to Question 89695, in what format the information requested about cavernous sinus thrombosis is held; and how many cases of cavernous sinus thrombosis were first diagnosed by the NHS in England in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

**Helen Whately:**

The information requested is not collected in this format as the relevant clinical codes do not isolate this specific condition.

■ **Coronavirus: Death****Marsha De Cordova:**[\[103001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Office for National Statistics data on coronavirus related deaths by hearing and vision impairment status, England: 24 January 2020 to 20 July 2022, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of that data.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[100886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November to Question 93721 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what conclusions have been reached as a result of monitoring by the MHRA on the best way of (a) diagnosing and (b) treating post-vaccination syndrome.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 6 December 2022]:* There has been no specific monitoring for post-vaccination syndrome as it is not a defined medical condition and therefore no such conclusions have been reached.

## ■ Cystic Fibrosis: Patients

**Feryal Clark:** [\[104347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings on the proportion of people with cystic fibrosis who reported missing a hospital appointment due to cost in the report by Cystic Fibrosis UK entitled *The cost of cystic fibrosis 2022*, published in June 2022.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England's data shows that the current cancellation by patient rate for cystic fibrosis services is approximately 12%. No specific assessment of the reasons for these cancellations has been made. The NHS Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme can provide support for eligible patients to meet reasonable travel costs to attend hospital appointments.

## ■ Dementia: Health Services

**Kate Osamor:** [\[104319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his policy to publish the 10-year plan for dementia before the end of the calendar year.

**Munira Wilson:** [\[104421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish details of his Department's 10-year plan for dementia.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* We are reviewing plans for dementia in England and further information will be available in due course.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[105293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is a long-term plan to tackle dementia; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

We are reviewing plans for dementia in England and further information will be available in due course.

## ■ Endometriosis: Medical Treatments

**Gill Furniss:** [\[104305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a timeline for the start and anticipated finish date for the review into NICE guidelines on diagnosis and management of Endometriosis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recently conducted a surveillance review of its endometriosis guideline. On 3 November 2022, NICE confirmed that it will update the sections on



diagnosing endometriosis, surgical management and surgical management, if fertility is a priority. NICE will also explore mental wellbeing and support for those with suspected or confirmed endometriosis during scoping of the update. The expected publication date of the updated guideline will be provided in due course.

## ■ Food: Research

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[105459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Government Food Strategy, published on 13 June 2022, what progress his Department has made in developing dedicated guidance materials for companies developing novel foods and processes; and when she plans to publish that guidance.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has commissioned a wholesale review of the Novel Foods Regulatory Framework, identifying and critically evaluating a range of potential regulatory models, taking into account the UK regulatory landscape and drawing on international best practice and stakeholder views.

The review is due to be completed by spring 2023 which will help inform guidance for novel food applications and stakeholders, later in 2023.

The FSA is also working towards developing a new Regulated Products (RP) application system, which the FSA hopes to be in operation by Spring 2023. The new system will provide applicants more support at the front end of the service and there will be a number of steps prior to applicants submitting a new application to help them establish what information is essential for their application to progress. In addition, the development of a new landing page will provide more sophisticated step-by-step guidance to assist applicants and will offer direction to other FSA business areas should a RP application not be the most appropriate action.

## ■ Functional Neurological Disorder

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[105240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what treatment is offered by the NHS in England to patients diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder; whether rehabilitation therapy services are available to patients in Dorset who are diagnosed with that disorder; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

There is no one single approach to managing patients with functional neurological disorder (FND). Treatment may involve drugs to manage specific symptoms, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, rehabilitation care and psychological support.

As with the majority of NHS services, Integrated Care Boards are responsible for commissioning local services, including rehabilitation therapy services in Dorset for patients with FND.

## ■ General Practitioners

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[105294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of GP appointments; and if he will make a statement.

**Neil O'Brien:**

On 22 September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which contains measures to assist people to make an informed choice on their general practitioner (GP) practice, book an appointment more easily, benefit from more care options and increase the diversity of general practice teams. This aims to increase the availability of appointment types in England.

We are investing at least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 through increasing and diversifying the workforce. General practice teams include a range of other health professionals in addition to GPs, to respond to the needs of patients and we are on schedule to recruit an additional 26,000 primary care staff.

## ■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Finance

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [\[103042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide resources to sexual health services to help relieve potential capacity issues, including targeting additional funding and support to local authorities in regions which are reporting longer waiting lists.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [\[103044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will provide further funding to sexual health commissioners to support more targeted outreach programmes.

**Neil O'Brien:**

In 2022/23, we have allocated more than £3.4 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services, including sexual health services, through the Public Health Grant and provided funding for the mpox response, including medicines and vaccinations.

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning comprehensive, open access sexual health services to meet local demand, including monitoring and acting if required to reduce waiting times for services. Individual local authorities determine spending priorities based on an assessment of local need for sexual health services, including targeted outreach programmes.

## ■ GP Surgeries: Veterans

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[104460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many GP practices have been accredited as veteran friendly.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[104461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department takes steps to monitor the service veteran-friendly General Practices provide to veterans.

**Maria Caulfield:**

As of November 2022, the Royal College of General Practitioners had accredited 1,781 practices as veteran friendly and approximately 800 Primary Care Networks have at least one veteran aware general practitioner practice in the area. While the impact of the 'veteran friendly' programme is not routinely monitored, an evaluation by the University of Chester, published May 2022, found that 84% of accredited practices reported a better understanding of veterans' needs.

## ■ Health Professions: Childcare

**Grahame Morris:** [\[104183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for Education on the potential merits of extending the 30 hours free childcare provision to include (a) student midwives, (b) nurses and (c) paramedics to help remove barriers for those seeking a career in the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* We have no current plans to hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Education.

Since September 2020 all eligible nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students have received a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year and eligible students with child dependants can also access a further £2,000 per academic year.

## ■ Health Services: International Cooperation

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[106425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) World Health Organisation Director General and (b) United Nations Secretary General on global health reform after the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Departmental officials have regular discussions with the World Health Organization's Director General and senior leadership on global health reform following the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been no specific discussions with the United Nations Secretary General.

**■ Healthy Start Scheme**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[104303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the income threshold for Healthy Start Vouchers in line with inflation.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are currently no plans to increase the income threshold for Healthy Start in line with inflation.

**■ Healthy Start Scheme: Publicity**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[104301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department spent on publicity for the Healthy Start Voucher scheme in the last year.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[104302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to further publicise the Healthy Start Voucher scheme.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The information requested on expenditure is not currently held centrally as it has not yet been validated. The NHS Business Services Authority promotes the Healthy Start scheme through its digital channels and has created free tools for stakeholders promote the scheme locally.

**■ HIV Infection: Drugs**

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [\[103040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide funding to review the cases of people recently diagnosed with HIV in order to identify any opportunities which may have been missed to prescribe PrEP.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The HIV Action Plan commits to improve uptake and access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), including maintaining £23 million through the Public Health Grant and increasing innovation in the delivery of and equity of access to PrEP for population groups. In 2022/23, we have allocated more than £3.4 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services through the Public Health Grant, including sexual health services. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning comprehensive, open access sexual health services to meet local demand, including HIV testing and access to PrEP.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** [\[104335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to amend PrEP eligibility criteria to enable that drug to be more widely available to people at risk of contracting HIV.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are no current plans to amend eligibility criteria for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Access to PrEP is based on existing clinical guidelines which allows clinicians to prescribe following a consideration of the patient's risks and assessing the benefits and potential harms of provision. Clinical guidelines published by the British HIV Association and the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV are accredited by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and are available at the following link:

<https://www.bhiva.org/file/5b729cd592060/2018-PrEP-Guidelines.pdf>

**■ Hormone Replacement Therapy: Shortages****Anneliese Dodds:****[104412]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of shortages of hormonal replacement therapies.

**Anneliese Dodds:****[104413]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of reports that women are struggling to access HRT despite medical bodies reporting no supply issues.

**Anneliese Dodds:****[104414]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of shortages of HRT.

**Anneliese Dodds:****[104415]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that women are struggling to access HRT despite medical bodies reporting no supply issues.

**Maria Caulfield:**

There are over 70 hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products available in the United Kingdom and while most remain in good supply, a range of factors including an increase in demand has led to issues with a limited number of products. We have been working with suppliers, stakeholders and the National Health Service and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to maintain overall supply, including expediting resupply dates of the disrupted HRT products.

Since Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) on specific HRT products were introduced to ensure even distribution and allow alternative products to be dispensed, supplies have now improved and recently, several SSPs have been removed. Suppliers have secured additional stock of products experiencing shortages and deliveries have been expedited. We share regular communications on shortages, discontinuations and supply information with the NHS.

**Sir Alan Campbell:****[105260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to tackle the shortages of HRT medication.

**Maria Caulfield:**

There are over 70 hormone replacement therapy (HRT) products available in the United Kingdom and while most remain in good supply, factors including an increase in demand has led to supply issues with a limited number of products. We are working with suppliers and the National Health Service and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to maintain overall supply, including expediting resupply dates of the disrupted HRT products, filling supply gaps and preventing future shortages.

Since Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) were issued for HRT products to provide an even distribution and allow alternative products to be dispensed, supplies have improved for many products and several SSPs have been removed. Suppliers have secured additional stock of the HRT products experiencing shortages and deliveries have been expedited. We share regular communications on shortages and discontinuations with the NHS on HRT supply issues via the on the Specialist Pharmacy Services medicine supply tool.

**■ Hyperactivity: Alcoholic Drinks****Dan Carden:****[105472]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to his Answer of 6 December 2022 to Question 98842 on Hyperactivity: Alcoholic Drinks, if his Department will undertake such an assessment.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We have no current plans to make a specific assessment.

[The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's \(NICE\) clinical guideline CG115 on Alcohol-use disorders](#) states the prevalence of alcohol misuse is higher in adults with ADHD than those in the general population.

**■ Influenza: Vaccination****Derek Twigg:****[105275]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the take up is of the flu vaccine for over 50s in the Halton local authority area compared to the same period in 2021.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The following table shows the uptake for the flu vaccination in Halton local authority in the 50 to 64 years old age group and all those aged 65 years old in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 season, as of 31 October 2022.

	2021/22	2022/23
50 to 64 years old in a clinical risk group	43.9%	43.8%
50 to 64 years old not in a clinical risk group	24.3%	23.2%
Aged 65 years old and over	62.2%	68.9%

Sources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-influenza-vaccine-uptake-in-gp-patients-monthly-data-2022-to-2023>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-gp-patients-monthly-data-2021-to-2022>

## ■ Integrated Care Boards: Health Professions

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[104279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many health clinicians are members of integrated care boards; and how many integrated care boards have health clinicians on them.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[104280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many social care representatives are there on integrated care boards; and how many integrated care boards have direct representation from the social care sector.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[104281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Directors of Public Health are on integrated care boards; and how many integrated care boards have a Director of Public Health on them.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ Liver Cancer

**Margaret Ferrier:** [\[102874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of liver cancer patients were diagnosed at stages 3 and 4 in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

**Helen Whately:**

This data is not held centrally in the format requested.

## ■ Medical Records: Children

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[104181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a unique patient identifier for children to improve health outcomes.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Every child is assigned a National Health Service (NHS) number at birth or the first time they have contact with NHS services. The NHS number acts as a unique patient identifier and is used to share information within electronic healthcare records. This contributes to improved health outcomes for children by ensuring that health professionals identify patients correctly and have access to information to inform the delivery of appropriate care.

Through the Health and Care Act 2022, the Government has committed to report on Government's policy on information sharing in relation to the safeguarding of children, by summer 2023. The report will include an explanation of whether it is the Government's policy that a consistent child identifier should be used across agencies.

## ■ Pancreatic Cancer UK

**Martyn Day:** [\[101753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet Pancreatic Cancer UK.

**Helen Whately:**

I met with representatives from Pancreatic Cancer UK on 22 November 2022 to discuss a range of issues, including increasing early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in England.

## ■ Pancreatic Cancer: Medical Treatments

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[95955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there has been an increase in the number of people with pancreatic cancer being prescribed Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy in the last year.

**Helen Whately:**

This information requested is not collected.

## ■ Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[104451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to offer compensation to people effected by Valproate in pregnancy.



**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review did not accept the recommendation to establish a separate redress scheme for those harmed by sodium valproate. We have worked with NHS Resolution to launch an online gateway to provide further support to patients who may wish to bring a clinical negligence claim in relation to sodium valproate. We are also improving the safety of medicines and medical devices through setting high standards for industry to market and manufacture products to reduce harm in the future.

**■ Respiratory System: Diseases****Rachael Maskell:**[\[102895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential correlation between trends in the level of (a) hospital admissions for (i) respiratory syncytial virus and (ii) other respiratory conditions and (b) fuel poverty.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[102896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of fuel poverty on the number of people (a) seeking doctors' appointments and (b) being admitted to hospital for respiratory conditions.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We are working across Government to identify the population groups most vulnerable to the impact of increased cost of living and the most appropriate support which can be provided.

**■ Rutherford Health Group: Insolvency****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[101756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact on cancer patients of the Thames Valley of Rutherford Health Group going into liquidation; and if he will take steps to reopen the Rutherford Cancer Centres.

**Helen Whately:**

There are no current plans to reopen Rutherford Cancer Centres. There are no issues with Proton Beam Therapy access within the National Health Service in England and this was the main service offered by Rutherford Health Group.

**■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Health Services****Daisy Cooper:**[\[101793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the impact of the rising cost of living on people with chronic conditions such as sickle cell disease.

**Helen Whately:**

The Government announced £37 billion for measures to address the cost of living, including £15 billion for the most vulnerable households. Those in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as the Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance have received a Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150.

**■ Sickle Cell Diseases: Prescriptions****Janet Daby:**[\[105560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending free prescriptions to individuals with sickle cell disease.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. Approximately 89% of prescription items are dispensed free of charge and there are exemptions from prescription charges which those with sickle cell disease may be eligible for and be in receipt of free prescriptions. In 2022/23, prescription charges have been frozen, which applies to the single prescription charge and prescription pre-payment certificates.

**■ Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015****Stella Creasy:**[\[105306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans the Government has to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Through the Retained EU Law (Reform and Revocation) Bill, the Government is currently reviewing which retained European Union law should be repealed, reformed or preserved. The Government continues to work with a range of stakeholders to ensure that any such reforms maintain current standards in public health.

**■ Veterans: Disability****Alan Brown:**[\[104209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of potential funding streams to help support veterans with the cost of specialist (a) wheelchairs and (b) mobility aids since the end of funding made available from LIBOR fines.

**Alan Brown:**[\[104210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing £2.2 million over five years to reinstate Veterans' Mobility Fund.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* No specific assessments have been made.

In England, the National Health Service has a range of equipment available, following an assessment of clinical need. Bespoke NHS support for veterans is also available, such as personal wheelchair budgets.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Asylum: Albania****Selaine Saxby:****[97785]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons the rates of approval for asylum claims made by people from Albania are different in the UK to those of other countries in Europe.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Other countries in Europe have legal migration routes that may impact the number of asylum claims lodged and subsequently granted. For example, Germany pursued a Western Balkan strategy which included issuing of 250,000 work visas from 2016-2020 and subsequently saw a 90% reduction in total asylum claims from the region across 2015-2017, from 120,882 first time applications in 2015 to 10,915 in 2017. Asylum grant rates can fluctuate for a number of different reasons, for example prioritisation of certain case types, including those more vulnerable for safeguarding or health-related reasons, and changes in country situations. Within a nationality, the grant rate can also vary. For example, despite the overall grant rate for Albanians in the year ending September 2022 being 51%, for Albanian adult men the grant rate was 13% and for Albanian women and children it was 88% ([How many people do we grant protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

The domestic UK case law of [TD and AD \(Trafficked women\) CG \[2016\] UKUT 92 \(IAC\)](#) sets out the current approach to assess asylum claims from Albanian females who claim to be a victim of trafficking. It details the likelihood of risk on return, vulnerability factors that must be taken into account, and whether there is sufficiency of protection in Albania. Other European countries are not bound by this, or any other UK case law.

**■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation****Lee Anderson:****[103024]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many reports of criminal damage at asylum seeker accommodation there have been since 1 January 2022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office does not hold this information.

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[103025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much repair to damage at asylum seeker accommodation has cost since 1 January 2022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office does not hold this information.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Nottingham South

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[105329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support survivors of domestic abuse in Nottingham South during the cost of living crisis.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for this Government. A central part of this is making sure victims and survivors get the support they need.

The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, which we published in March, invests over £230 million, including over £140 million specifically for supporting victims and survivors. Its commitments include doubling funding for the National Domestic Abuse Helpline and providing multi-year funding for support services. This avoids services being dependent on yearly grants. This will help to ensure delivery of high-quality support throughout any increases in the cost of living

The Plan also committed to establish trials of a 'flexible fund', which charities could use to provide extra money to victims and survivors in light of cost of living pressures.

Locally, the Home Office has recently awarded the Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire over £1 million, through the Children Affected by Domestic Abuse Fund, to provide specialist support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse in the area until 2024/25.

For the current financial year, the Home Office has also provided over £135,000 to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire to support the delivery of a programme that aims to change perpetrator's behaviour, which can help to reduce reoffending.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[102820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to correspondence of 16 August 2022 from the Rt Hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead case number MP76084IU on a Formal Complaint about a Passport Application.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 6 December 2022.

## ■ Visas: Applications

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[104475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for visas in (a) September (b) October (c) November awaited an outcome for more than 6 weeks.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[104476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for visas in (a) September (b) October (c) November awaited an outcome for more than 10 weeks.

**Wendy Chamberlain:** [\[104479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for visas in (a) September (b) October (c) November awaited an outcome for more than 24 weeks.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Information relating to the processing times of visas can be found at the link below:

[Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data).

VSI\_02: Percentage of applications, for each Route, processed within Service Standards.

## ■ Visas: Skilled Workers

**Peter Kyle:** [\[105389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of skilled worker visa applicants who applied for a faster decision received a decision within the requested timescale in the latest period for which data is available.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes data on the number of skilled worker visas which have been processed outside target processing times in our Transparency data.

The Home Office Transparency data sets out how the department is performing against its service standard, which can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [Visas and Citizenship data: Q3 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## ■ Visas: Turkey

**Peter Grant:** [\[105364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average processing time was for Turkish Businessperson visa extension applications in the latest period for which data is available.

**Peter Grant:** [\[105365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of Turkish Businessperson visa extension application decisions have taken over 6 months in the most recent period for which data is available.

**Peter Grant:**

[\[105366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Turkish Businessperson visa extension applications are currently outstanding; and how many of those have been waiting for more than 6 months.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The latest data on ECAA matters is routinely published as part of UKVI Transparency data.

The most recent published data for outstanding ECAA applications can be found here: [Visas and Citizenship data: Q3 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-data-sets/visas-and-citizenship-data-q3-2022)

Under Visas and Citizenship Data, Tab VSI\_03 includes the number of straightforward applications and non-straightforward applications which remained outstanding at the end of the last reported period.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### ■ House of Commons: Telephone Services

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[98675\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what assessment the Commission had made of the reliability of the House of Commons Polycom telephone system; what procedures are in place to ensure faults are rectified speedily; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Charles Walker:**

Between August and December there have been four major incidents relating to the desk telephones provided in Members' offices.

Work-arounds were deployed where possible; two incidents remain outstanding and are expected to be resolved in December 2022.

The response and resolution of these incidents was protracted due to the complexity of the underlying software and existing telephony infrastructure.

Earlier this year a Voice Programme was established to address the need for improvements to voice services for Members and Peers. This will be targeted to improve the user experience and reduce the risk of disruption to parliamentary services.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Department for International Trade: Accountancy

**John Cryer:**

[\[102744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all (i) contracts, (ii) consultancies and (iii) other services placed with the

accountancy firms (A) Deloitte & Touche, (B) Ernst & Young, (C) KPMG and (D) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by (1) their Department, (2) any predecessor Departments and (3) departmental agencies.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

*[Holding answer 9 December 2022]:* The Department for International Trade (DIT) was established in 2016. Contracts above £10,000 for DIT and its Agency, the Trade Remedies Authority, are published on Contracts Finder.

■ **Department for International Trade: Chief Scientific Advisers**

**Greg Clark:**

[\[100920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for International Trade draws from a range of scientific advice and expertise, including its Chief Scientific Adviser. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

## JUSTICE

■ **Crimes against the Person: Convictions**

**Steve Reed:**

[\[105368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people found guilty of the abduction, rape and murder of a stranger in the last five years.

**Edward Argar:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants convicted for abduction, rape and murder offences in the last five years in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022](#).

However, the relationship between defendant and victim is not held centrally in the Court Proceedings database. This information may be held on court records but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate costs.

■ **Euthanasia: Welsh Government**

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[105327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with the Welsh Government on the devolution of responsibility for assisted dying.

**Edward Argar:**

There have been no discussions with the Welsh Government about responsibility for the law on assisted dying being devolved to Wales.

## ■ HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Weapons

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[105319]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many weapons in each category were confiscated on the HM Courts and Tribunals Service estate in each of the last 12 months.

**Mike Freer:**

The number of weapons in each category confiscated on the HM Courts and Tribunals Service estate in each of the last 12 months is as follows:

	KNIVES BLADE OVER 3"	KNIVES BLADE UNDER 3"	OTHER BLADES	FIREARMS (GENUINE)	FIREARM (OTHER)	OTHER WEAPONS	SHARPS (GENERAL)	TOTAL
<b>Dec-21</b>	13	175	166	0	2	14	478	848
<b>Jan-22</b>	9	229	194	0	1	45	717	1195
<b>Feb-22</b>	14	229	198	0	3	15	800	1259
<b>Mar-22</b>	16	280	171	1	1	51	850	1370
<b>Apr-22</b>	5	216	245	0	0	33	895	1394
<b>May-22</b>	18	273	301	0	5	30	993	1620
<b>Jun-22</b>	26	267	193	0	1	39	996	1522
<b>Jul-22</b>	30	297	302	0	2	62	1119	1812
<b>Aug-22</b>	26	301	292	0	5	161	1453	2238
<b>Sep-22</b>	20	286	320	1	100	198	1363	2288
<b>Oct-22</b>	31	408	552	0	4	121	1867	2983
<b>Nov-22</b>	24	433	423	0	10	176	1962	3028
								21,557

HM Courts and Tribunals Service has embedded a series of security measures designed to keep its buildings, and the people within them (including staff, judiciary, contractor, jurors, court and tribunal users) safe and secure. Security search on entry procedures are in place to ensure risks to personal safety are minimised. Details of the [policy](#), including information on [items not allowed](#) into court and tribunal buildings are available online.



## ■ **Hunting Act 2004: Prosecutions**

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[105521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been prosecuted under the Hunting Act 2004 in each year since 2010.

**Edward Argar:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of defendants prosecuted for offences under the Hunting Act 2004, in England and Wales, year ending June 2018 to year ending June 2022, available in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022](#). For figures between January 2010 and December 2017, please see the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2020](#).

In the 2022 data tool, navigate to the 'Prosecutions and Convictions' tab and use the *Offence* filter to select the offence: '121A Offences under Hunting Act 2004'. The number of prosecutions on a principal offence basis will populate row 24.

In the 2020 data tool, use the *Offence* filter to select the offence: '121A Offences under Hunting Act 2004'. The number of prosecutions on a principal offence basis will populate row 23.

Note that the two data tools will overlap by the six-month period July to December 2017, which is counted in each.

## ■ **Law Centres: Greater Manchester**

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[103011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with representatives of the Greater Manchester Law Centre since the start of this financial year.

**Mike Freer:**

The Secretary of State for Justice has not had discussions with representatives from the Greater Manchester Law Centre since the start of this financial year.

## ■ **Ministry of Justice: Crimes against the Person**

**Steve Reed:**

[\[102864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the number of staff who have been victims of (a) sexual harassment and (b) bullying in his Department in its Westminster premises each year since 2018.

**Mike Freer:**

There is zero tolerance for bullying across the civil service. The MoJ also has policies in place to support staff facing any form of bullying, harassment or victimisation while at work.

The table below shows the number of grievances raised by MoJ staff where the grievance reason includes "Bullying" or "Harassment - sex", and the outcome is

either "Upheld" or "Partially Upheld", and the member of staff's office location is either 102 Petty France or Clive House, by year.

	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Grievances where the reason includes "Harassment - sex" and the outcome is either "Upheld" or "Partially Upheld" and the member of staff's office location is either 102 Petty France or Clive House</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Grievances where the reason includes "Bullying" and the outcome is either "Upheld" or "Partially Upheld" and the member of staff's office location is either 102 Petty France or Clive House</b>	Less than 5	0	Less than 5	7

**Notes and caveats:**

- Please note: grievance data only accounts for staff grievances raised about other members of staff. Any complaints against Ministers or Special Advisers are registered in a separate system run by the Cabinet Office.
- Data suppression is applied where the number of cases is less than 5.
- Grievances can be raised for multiple reasons; cases are selected where the relevant reason is cited.
- Year is based on year the grievance was opened on the case management system.
- Grievances are included where the outcome was "Upheld" or "Partially Upheld".
- If an appeal on the original case outcome has been made, the appeal outcome is used rather than the original case outcome.
- In a small number of cases multiple outcomes are recorded, these have been included if "Upheld" or "Partially Upheld" is one of the outcomes.
- Data covers employees in Ministry of Justice Head Quarters, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, Legal Aid Agency, Office of the Public Guardian and Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.
- Cases are selected if the member of staff's HR database Employee Location field is either 102 Petty France or Clive House.

**■ Ministry of Justice: Theft****Sarah Olney:****[104235]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many of his Department's (a) laptops, (b) mobile phones, (c) memory sticks and (d) external hard drives have been lost or stolen in each of the last five years.

**Mike Freer:**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), including its executive agencies (HM Courts & Tribunals Service, HM Prison & Probation Service, Legal Aid Agency, Office of the Public Guardian and Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority) and smaller public bodies, treats all breaches of security very seriously and requires all breaches to be reported regardless of whether there is firm evidence of loss or just an inability to account for some devices. All incidents are subjected to an initial security risk assessment with further action on a proportional basis.

It is MoJ policy that all laptops and removable media are encrypted to minimise the impact if a loss were to occur. All mobile phones are deactivated once reported missing to minimise the impact if a loss was to occur.

For the year 2018, the following figures were reported as unaccounted for due to being lost or stolen:

- 75 Laptops
- 76 Mobiles
- 3 Memory sticks
- 0 External hard drives

For the year 2019, the following figures were reported as unaccounted for due to being lost or stolen:

- 117 Laptops
- 151 Mobiles
- 12 Memory sticks
- 0 External hard drives

For the year 2020, the following figures were reported as unaccounted for due to being lost or stolen:

- 99 Laptops
- 198 Mobiles
- 4 Memory sticks
- 0 External hard drives

For the year 2021, the following figures were reported as unaccounted for due to being lost or stolen:

- 126 Laptops
- 202 Mobiles
- 6 Memory sticks
- 0 External hard drives

For the year 2022, to date the following figures were reported as unaccounted for due to being lost or stolen:

- 306 Laptops
- 334 Mobiles
- 0 External Hard drives
- 0 Memory sticks

This information does not include separately reported losses of National Probation/Community Rehabilitation Services mobile phones which were allocated during COVID to Probation Service Users.

This amounted to 5793 low cost phones, reported as either lost or stolen from those that were issued at that time.

## ■ Powers of Attorney: Fraud

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[\[105550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many reported cases of fraud reported to the Office of the Public Guardian have been related to a Power of Attorney in the last five years; and how many of those cases resulted in (a) further action or (b) reference to the Court of Protection in that period.

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[\[105551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many reported cases of fraud reported to the Office of the Public Guardian relating Power of Attorney were passed to the police or the CPS from the Office of the Public Guardian on the death of the alleged victim in the last five years.

**Mike Freer:**

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) has been recording data since April 2021 on concerns raised about Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPA) that mention fraud. Since April 2021, there have been 178 initial concerns that mention fraud. OPG carry out investigations following reports of fraud and act where they have the jurisdiction to do so.

From April 2019 to 31 October 2022, 15 fraudulently created LPAs were removed from the register following investigation. In 10 of these cases, the Public Guardian removed the LPA from the register. The Public Guardian referred the remaining 5 cases to the Court of Protection, which led to LPAs being subsequently removed. Fraudulent LPAs currently represent less than 0.1% of all registered LPAs, which exceed 6 million.

The OPG records the number of reported cases of fraud, but not the number that are passed to the police or the CPS on the death of an alleged victim. The OPG's legal authority ends upon the death of a donor (the individual who has created the LPA). As a result, where there is alleged fraud following the death of a donor, OPG would advise the concern raiser to raise their concern directly with the police if they feel it is appropriate.

The Government has in the past weeks taken steps to strengthen protections against fraud in LPAs yet further. The Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) Bill, introduced by Stephen Metcalfe MP, will bring forward government proposals to make the system quicker, easier to access and more secure for the thousands of people who rely on an LPA every year. This includes a new requirement to verify identity through official documents, such as a driving licence, passport and a pension or benefits letter, helping to prevent the registration of lasting powers of attorney created by strangers through fraud by false representation. The Bill will also allow third parties to raise objections where those close to the case are concerned and provide that all objections go to the Public Guardian in the first instance. The Public Guardian will then apply the appropriate test to determine whether to register the lasting power of attorney.

## ■ Prison Accommodation: Standards

**Steve Reed:** [\[102918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison places taken permanently out of action due to their condition in each year since 2010.

**Damian Hinds:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave on 4 November 2022 to his previous question number 72998 ([Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)).

## ■ Prisoner Escapes

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[101765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2022 to Question 88985 on Prisoner Escapes, what offences are categorised as miscellaneous crimes against society; and why one offence is listed as unknown.

**Damian Hinds:**

Miscellaneous crimes against society offences show police-recorded crimes against society (i.e. where there is no direct victim) which do not fit into any other category. This includes offences such as failure to surrender to bail, dangerous driving and perjury.

Please see the below link to the offence group classification document published alongside the 'criminal justice statistics quarterly' publication on the MOJ website where you can see a full list of crimes included under each offence classification. [Criminal justice statistics quarterly - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The one offence listed as unknown was by a remand prisoner not yet sentenced.

## ■ Prisoner Escapes: Maladministration and Prisoner Escapes

**Steve Reed:** [\[105452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2022 to Question 101738 on Prisoners' Release: Maladministration and Prisoner Escapes, what estimate he has made of the number of prisoners (a) released in error or (b) escaped that are still at large.

**Damian Hinds:**

A prisoner is released in error if released earlier than their correct release date. They will be unlawfully at large until they are subsequently released correctly or returned to custody. Data is not routinely collected on the number of individuals released in error that remain unlawfully at large. The information requested could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Data is, however, available on the number of offenders still at large who have escaped custody. Escapes from custody include where an offender flees during a

court appearance, when being escorted from court to prison and in extremely rare circumstances, directly from prison. The vast majority were recaptured by police either immediately or within a matter of hours. Offenders who break the law will be punished and face extra time in prison when appropriate.

The table below shows the number of individuals still at large as of May 2022.

DATE	NUMBER OF ESCAPEES STILL AT LARGE
1st May 2022 <sup>5</sup>	10

### Data sources and quality

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

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

(2) Includes escapes from establishments, HMPPS escorts and contractor escorts.

(3) The data held only covers escapes from 01 April 2011 onwards.

(4) The only includes escapes to 31 March 2022.

(5) Due to how our data is refreshed for publication, this only lists prisoners that were unlawfully at large on 01 May 2022, they may have since been recaptured.

### ■ Prisoner Escapes: Sexual Offences

**Steve Reed:**

[\[102871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of sexual assaults committed by prison escapees since 2010.

**Damian Hinds:**

We are unable to answer this question as the required detail may not be on the prison NOMIS system in all cases. To obtain a robust estimate would require linking to and checking police records for all prisoners in scope to identify whether they have committed a sexual offence (or sexual offences). This would therefore constitute a disproportionate cost.

The vast majority of escapes were recaptured by police either immediately or within a matter of hours and there are no cases of prison escapees remaining at large. Offenders who break the law will be punished – including extra time in jail when appropriate.

**■ Prisoners' Release: Christmas****Steve Reed:** [\[105431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of offenders granted (a) early release, (b) temporary license and (c) home detention curfew over Christmas in each year since 2010.

**Damian Hinds:**

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

Where a prisoner is serving a sentence of 5 days' imprisonment or more and their automatic release date falls on a weekend or bank holiday the Criminal Justice Act 1961 requires their release on the preceding working day so that there are appropriate services and support available when they are released.

The attached tables give data for the years 2010 to 2021 on the number of prisoners who were: released on HDC in the week including Christmas Day; or, released early due to the specific provisions of the 1961 Act; or, on temporary release on 25 December.

**Attachments:**

1. Table\_105431 [2022-12-12 105431 Table.xlsx]

**■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation****Ellie Reeves:** [\[101768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2022 to Question 88987 on Prisons: Rehabilitation, how many prisoners completed an accredited programme in prison each year since 2010.

**Damian Hinds:**

These data are published in the Prison Learning and Accredited Programme Statistics bulletin. Table 3.2 contains the information, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1108451/Education\\_Publication\\_202122.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1108451/Education_Publication_202122.xlsx).

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[105537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in how many prisons the Regime Management Plan under PSI 07/2017 requires prisoners to be engaged in work, education or other activities designed to assist their rehabilitation, morning and afternoon from Monday to Friday.

**Damian Hinds:**

All prisons in England and Wales must have a Regime Management Plan that includes a full range of purposeful activity, education, and employment for prisoners from Monday to Friday.



## ■ Prisons: Education

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[101766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to Question 88987 on 21 November 2022, how many learners have been in the classroom each year since 2010.

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[101767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to Question 88987 on 21 November 2022, what the annual average prisoner's level of (a) numeracy, (b) literacy, (c) skills and qualification has been since 2010.

**Damian Hinds:**

Prior to 2019, the education contract was managed through the Department for Education and funded by Education, Skills and Funding Agency. Data for that period are therefore not held.

Attendance levels for the period 2019 to date are shown below:

### ATTENDANCE RATES

Contract Year	Sessions
2019	1,999,227
2020	8685
2021	593,414
2022 (to date)	982,050

It should be noted the data reflects attendance in education classrooms. Education delivery is increasingly taking place in workshops, wings and in cell. Attendance data for these elements are not available.

The assessment tables below highlight the assessment scores in Mathematics and English between 2019 and 2022, which inform how prisoners are allocated appropriate education courses based on their needs, and ability.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 3
English Assessment 2019	Maths Assessment 2019
31.06%	34.16%
English Assessment 2020	Maths Assessment 2020
33.58%	38.50%
English Assessment 2021	Maths Assessment 2021
29.72%	35.00%

**LEVEL 1**

English Assessment 2022

26.98%

**LEVEL 3**

Maths Assessment 2022

32.79%

Since the conclusion of the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services in May 2022, we are securing increasing numbers of learners back in the classroom and increasing participation in rehabilitative activities.

As set out in the Prisons Strategy White Paper, we are committed to improving education in prisons and we are delivering a Prisoner Education Service to raise prisoners' levels of numeracy, literacy, skills and qualifications, with the aim of helping them secure jobs upon release and drive down re-offending.

### ■ Prisons: Repairs and Maintenance

**Steve Reed:**

[\[102920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the annual cost to the public purse of prison maintenance requirements.

**Damian Hinds:**

The annual allocation for prison maintenance is determined as part of the Spending Review process, which determines departmental budgets. This year, the department is investing £225m in custodial capital maintenance and £235m in day-to-day facilities management to improve the overall condition of the prison estate.

### ■ Rape: Crown Court

**Steve Reed:**

[\[104246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of cases heard at (a) Leeds Crown Court, (b) Newcastle Crown Court and (c) Snaresbrook Crown Court were rape cases in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

**Edward Argar:**

Data concerning the volume and percentage of Crown Court case receipts for rape offences can be found below. Data for 2022 represents the first six months of the year, as data beyond that will be published in the future. The Specialist Sexual Violence Support project was launched in each of these Crown Court locations in October 2022.

<b>Crown Court</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>All other offences</b>	<b>Rape total receipts</b>	<b>Rape total %</b>	<b>Total receipts</b>
Leeds	2020	3,243	81	2.4	3,324
	2021	3,384	99	2.8	3,483
	2022 (to June)	1,691	64	3.6	1,755
Newcastle Upon Tyne	2020	2,711	87	3.1	2,798
	2021	2,545	81	3.1	2,626
	2022 (to June)	1,144	29	2.5	1,173
Snaresbrook	2020	4,071	66	1.6	4,137
	2021	4,113	59	1.4	4,172
	2022 (to June)	2,070	34	1.6	2,104

Table 1

### ■ Sexual Offences: Disclosure of Information

**Steve Reed:**

[\[105390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will estimate the number of individuals convicted of an offence under section 1(1) of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 relating to the publication of information that could lead to the identification of the person against whom an offence to which the Act applies is alleged to have been committed in each of the last five years.

**Edward Argar:**

The number of defendants convicted of an offence under section 1(1) of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992, on a principal offence basis, has been provided in Table 1.

**Attachments:**

1. Table\_105390 [2022-12-12 105390 Table1.xlsx]

### ■ Special Measures for Child Witnesses (Sexual Offences) Regulations 2013

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[104155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has plans to (a) reform, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Special Measures for Child Witnesses (Sexual Offences) Regulations 2013.

**Edward Argar:**

The Secretary of State will review this and other pieces of Retained EU Law for which the Ministry of Justice is responsible and decide whether they should remain on the statute book, and if so whether they should in due course be amended using one of

the powers in the Retained EU Law Bill, or whether they should be left to sunset. However, protecting child victims is a priority for this government and we will ensure that we consider the current framework of rights and protections very carefully.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Building Regulations 2010

**Stella Creasy:** [\[105305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans the Government has to (a) replace (b) revoke or (c) retain the Building Regulations 2010.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [104156](#) on 12 December 2022.

### ■ Community Relations: Rural Areas

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[100938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase community cohesion in rural communities.

**Lee Rowley:**

This Government is committed to a vision of British society where people - whatever their background - live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Everyone in society has a role to play in ensuring that we live in a country where anyone can achieve anything, no matter where they live or come from.

Through its Levelling Up agenda the Government will help to bolster community empowerment and support local community spaces and relationships.

For example, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) provides £2.6 billion of new taxpayer subsidy for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund. One of the Fund's investment priorities is 'communities and place' which aims to strengthen the social fabric of communities.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is a rural top up to the UKSPF, providing allocations for eligible local authorities in England to help address the additional needs and challenges facing rural areas. The REPF funds capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

### ■ Freeports: Economic Growth

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[105513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the press release entitled First Freeports launched in major economic boost, published

on 7 December 2022, whether his Department is taking steps to measure (a) levels of economic activity created by the new freeports and (b) how much and what proportion of that economic activity is displaced from other areas.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The [Freeports programme monitoring and evaluation strategy](#) sets out the approach the Department will take to measure the impact of Freeports, which includes evaluating the overall impact of Freeports on economic growth.

■ **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[101044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for differences in the levels of funding received by local authorities under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme; and what steps he is taking to ensure that all hosts under the scheme receive adequate financial support.

**Angela Crawley:**

[\[102906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Homes for Ukraine Scheme payments.

**Angela Crawley:**

[\[102907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the increases in costs of living on the ability of Homes for Ukraine Scheme sponsors to financially support those using that scheme.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Details on funding for the scheme are available [here](#). Guidance for Homes for Ukraine guests, hosts, and councils is available [here](#).

We are continuing to work with local authorities and sponsors to support them with their hosting arrangements. Any future policy announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ **Housing: Energy**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[105313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many homes have Energy Performance Certificate below Level C, as of 24 November 2022.

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[105314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which constituencies have the highest proportion of homes with an Energy Performance Certificate below Level C.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [99812](#) on 5 December 2022. Data can be further refined on the Open Data Communities website [here](#).

**Leasehold: Older People****Helen Morgan:****[104411]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to take steps to (a) increase protections for owners of leasehold retirement properties and (b) ensure works to those properties are carried out in a timely fashion.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In the Levelling Up White Paper, we committed to a new taskforce on the issue of older people's housing, which will look at ways we can provide greater choice, quality and security of housing for older people, and support the growth of a thriving older people's housing sector in this country. Arrangements for the taskforce are still ongoing and further details will be released in due course.

The Ground Rent Act came in force on 30 June 2022 for most new residential leases, and from 1 April 2023 this will also apply to retirement leases.

Where retirement housing providers are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, the Regulator has the role of ensuring that providers are well-managed and are able to meet the regulatory standards.

The Care Quality Commission oversees standards of personal care services in housing-with-care retirement settings irrespective of housing tenure.

**Leasehold: Reform****Sir Charles Walker:****[105270]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent progress his Department has made on (a) allowing leaseholders to extend their leases to 990 years and (b) implementing other leasehold reforms.

**Lucy Frazer:**

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

**Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Impact Assessments****Alex Norris:****[105569]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to publish the impact assessment for the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill.

**Lucy Frazer:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [76093](#) on 7 November 2022.

## ■ Night Shelters: Berkshire

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[102968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment has he made of the availability of shelters for rough sleepers in (a) Slough and (b) Berkshire.

**Felicity Buchan:**

*[Holding answer 8 December 2022]:* We are providing up to £500 million funding to 303 local authorities across England through the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-2025.

Information on funding allocations to local authorities is available [here](#).

## ■ Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[104156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has plans to (a) reform, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001.

**Lee Rowley:**

Policy announcements will be made in the usual way.

## ■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[102975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Spring Statement 2022 published 23 March 2022, whether the £400 million allocated to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the 2022-23 financial year has been reallocated.

**Dehenna Davison:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [99821](#), on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

## SCOTLAND

### ■ Scotland Office: Accountancy

**John Cryer:**

[\[102784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all (i) contracts, (ii) consultancies and (iii) other services placed with the accountancy firms (A) Deloitte & Touche, (B) Ernst & Young, (C) KPMG and (D) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by (1) their Department, (2) any predecessor Departments and (3) departmental agencies.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

None. The Scotland Office has not placed any contracts with A) Deloitte & Touche, (B) Ernst & Young, (C) KPMG and (D) PricewaterhouseCoopers in the period 2010-11 to date.

**TRANSPORT**■ **A15: Accidents****Sir Greg Knight:**[\[105271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many road traffic accidents have been reported on the A15 between Lincoln and the M180 in each of the last five years.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The number of personal injury road collisions reported to police on the A15 between Lincoln and the M180 for each year since 2017 is shown in the table.

YEAR	NUMBER OF COLLISIONS ON THE A15
2017	18
2018	30
2019	15
2020	9
2021	13

■ **A46: Repairs and Maintenance****Sir Greg Knight:**[\[105267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to Answer of 28 November to Question 94697, when the road surface is scheduled for resurfacing.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

As advised in my previous reply of 28 November the resurfacing works on the A46 between Hykeham and Winthorpe are due to commence in August 2023 and will finish in January 2024.

■ **Avanti West Coast: Standards****Derek Twigg:**[\[105272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Avanti trains between Runcorn and London have been cancelled each month since November 2021.



**Huw Merriman:**

Generally, Runcorn is served by one Avanti West Coast train per hour to and from London Euston.

PERIOD	NUMBER OF AVANTI WEST COAST SERVICES CANCELLED BETWEEN RUNCORN AND LONDON EUSTON (AVANTI WEST COAST CAUSED, BOTH DIRECTIONS)	NUMBER OF AVANTI WEST COAST SERVICES CANCELLED BETWEEN RUNCORN AND LONDON EUSTON (ALL CAUSES, BOTH DIRECTIONS)
14 November – 11 December 2021	19.5	23.5
12 December – 8 January 2022	46	49
9 January – 5 February 2022	12	13.5
6 February – 5 March 2022	20	27.5
6 March – 31 March 2022	28.5	29
1 April – 30 April 2022	46	53
1 May – 28 May 2022	31	41
29 May – 25 June 2022	44.5	56
26 June – 23 July 2022	115	138
24 July – 20 August 2022	80.5	88
21 August – 17 September	42.5	51
18 September – 15 October 2022	42.5	43
16 October – 12 November 2022	36.5	48.5

Cancellation data by rail period was provided by the operator.

1 = A train ran less than half its planned mileage

0.5 = A train was cancelled but ran more than half its planned mileage

'All causes' includes cancellations resulting from infrastructure failure as well as any other external cause such as trespass or other train/freight operator failure. In the same period there were seven instances of services failing to call at Runcorn on

route, as these services ran more than half their booked mileage they are counted as part cancellations in the table. None were Avanti West Coast caused.

## ■ Aviation: Fuels

**Andrew Selous:**

[\[104121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) providing funding and (b) implementing mechanisms to help support sustainable aviation fuel through a (i) Contracts for Difference mechanism or (ii) equivalent scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government recognises the significant challenges facing investment in emerging technologies such as SAF. That is why the Government launched the £165 million Advanced Fuels Fund in July and is actively looking at what more is needed to create the long-term conditions for competitive SAF projects in the UK. The Department recently commissioned an independent review to look at evidence that industry has provided regarding the barriers, opportunities and conditions required for a competitive SAF industry in the UK. More information will be provided on this in due course, subject to interactions with wider fiscal events.

## ■ Bus Services: Fares

**Holly Mumby-Croft:**

[\[105562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it remains his Department's policy to provide up to £60 million to help bus operators cap single fares on most services in England, outside London, at £2 per journey from January to March 2023.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Yes. We intend for this to operate from 1 January to 31 March 2023.

## ■ Department for Transport: Accountancy

**John Cryer:**

[\[102751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) nature and (b) value was of all (i) contracts, (ii) consultancies and (iii) other services placed with the accountancy firms (A) Deloitte & Touche, (B) Ernst & Young, (C) KPMG and (D) PricewaterhouseCoopers in each year since 2010-11 by (1) their Department, (2) any predecessor Departments and (3) departmental agencies.

**Jesse Norman:**

Details of the nature and award value of Government contracts from 2016 above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder. Each departmental agency is responsible for their contract data.

The Department for Transport have completed an internal search for the information and can confirm the following spend on consultancy services with the following suppliers:

FINANCIAL YEAR	DELOITTE LLP	ERNST & YOUNG LIMITED	KPMG	PRICEWATERHOUSE COOPERS
2010-11	£200,000.00	£0.00	£1.00	£250,001.00
2011-12	£0.00	£0.00	£750,000.00	£4,362,793.00
2012-13	£1,700.00	£350,000.00	£90,000.00	£3,791,587.00
2013-14	£568,544.00	£1,959,323.00	£330,000.00	£10,293,018.00
2014-15	£128,832.00	£1,805,743.00	£2,347,400.00	£2,628,688.00
2015-16	£36,559.00	£2,600,000.00	£2,323,615.00	£458,880.00
2016-17	£79,463.00	£623,000.00	£27,420,475.60	£2,089,591.00
2017-18	£0.00	£0.00	£1,200,000.00	£1,617,141.98
2018-19	£6,846,611.21	£3,350,000.01	£0.00	£5,138,235.00
2019-20	£4,716,844.00	£1,426,181.39	£4,921,695.00	£880,630.91
2020-21	£4,111,001.00	£15,925,332.00	£5,364,551.48	£3,084,509.00
2021-22	£14,310,091.57	£2,594,875.00	£17,663,791.00	£760,778.00
2022-23	£1,281,462.00	£2,510,000.00	£3,298,684.00	£522,926.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>£32,281,107.78</b>	<b>£33,144,454.40</b>	<b>£65,710,213.08</b>	<b>£35,878,779.77</b>

## ■ Department for Transport: Theft

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[104242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many of his Department's (a) laptops, (b) mobile phones, (c) memory sticks and (d) external hard drives have been lost or stolen in each of the last five years.

**Jesse Norman:**

DfT has recorded the total number for all agencies of devices reported lost/stolen from 2018 – 2022 as below.

	LAPTOPS	MOBILES	MEMORY STICKS	EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE
2018	14	50	1	0
2019	39	80	0	0
2020	13	30	0	0

	LAPTOPS	MOBILES	MEMORY STICKS	EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE
2021	12	33	1	0
2022	34	46	4	0

If a member of staff reports a device as lost or stolen, DfT will try and issue a remote wipe of the device and request that the IMEI is blocked. Laptops are fully encrypted.

### ■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[105243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many applications have been made to the rapid charging fund; how much of that fund has been allocated; and whether he is taking steps to distribute that fund by December 2023.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Rapid Charging Fund (RCF) is not yet open. The timing and process for the delivery of this funding is currently being planned and will be confirmed in due course.

### ■ **Railways: East of England**

**Tom Hunt:** [\[101797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the (a) frequency and (b) disruption to service from weekend engineering works on rail services from London to Ipswich.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Great Eastern Main Line is a very busy line, not just with passenger services throughout the day, but also freight services which can run during the night. Identifying opportunities to close the line can be challenging but carrying out essential maintenance and upgrades can improve reliability and the passenger experience. As the line is so busy and frequently used by heavy freight trains, some of the equipment wears out more quickly. Network Rail needs to strike a balance between the disruption caused by engineering work and the need to run a safe, reliable service.

Network Rail recently looked at whether it remains appropriate for the rail industry to carry out engineering works on bank holiday weekends and during holiday periods. Network Rail aims to ensure there is always a strong case for engineering works, which considers the varied impact on passengers and businesses across different regions and industries. It will continue to work to better understand how disruption impacts long-term travel patterns by rail and to provide passengers with information about disruption as far as possible in advance through a wide range of outlets.

## ■ Transport: Hydrogen

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[105428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of transport being an early market for low-carbon hydrogen projects.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government's Hydrogen Strategy states that transport is a 'crucial' early market for hydrogen, which will drive some of the earliest low carbon production in the UK. DfT is working closely with BEIS to deliver this ambition.

## TREASURY

### ■ Bank Services: Vulnerable Adults

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[105416\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of a cashless society on vulnerable people.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The government recognises that while the transition towards digital payments brings many opportunities cash continues to be used by millions of people across the UK, including those who may be in vulnerable groups.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has a considerable evidence base on cash provision and use across the UK. Analysis that was published by the FCA in February 2020 found that 5.4 million people are still reliant on cash. Meanwhile, the FCA's analysis shows that, as of the end of 2021, over 95% of the population are within two kilometres of a free-to-use cash access point, such as a free-to-use ATM, bank branch or Post Office branch.

The government is currently taking legislation to protect access to cash across the UK through Parliament as part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill 2022. The legislation will establish the FCA as the lead regulator for access to cash with responsibility and powers to seek to ensure reasonable provision of withdrawal and deposit facilities. This will ensure that people and businesses can continue to access cash withdrawal and deposit facilities, which in turn, will support those who use cash in their daily lives. Further details about the Bill can be found on the Parliament website: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3326>

### ■ Employers' contributions: Veterans

**Rachel Hopkins:**

[\[104462\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses received National Insurance contributions holidays for employing armed service leavers.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Between April 2022 and October 2022, 470 employers claimed the National Insurance contributions relief for employers who hire veterans.

■ **Excise Duties and VAT: Tobacco****Damian Green:**[\[102729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much excise duty and VAT the Government collected from the sale of tobacco products in each financial year since 2018-19.

**James Cartlidge:**

Data regarding receipts for tobacco duty can be found in the publication [HMRC tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the UK](#). Refer to column Y in the statistics table.

An extract is provided below showing Tobacco duties since 2018 to 2019. Figures are in £millions.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOBACCO DUTIES (£M)
2018 to 2019	9,290
2019 to 2020	8,804
2020 to 2021	9,964
2021 to 2022	10,278

With regards to VAT receipts on tobacco products, the information is not available. HMRC does not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services, including VAT on tobacco products. This is because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level within their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[105322\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November from the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to Question 902288, Official Report column 513, and with reference to the letter of that date to the Economic Secretary from the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall, when the Economic Secretary plans to meet the hon. Member to discuss the case raised in that Question.

**Andrew Griffith:**

I regularly engage with colleagues across the house on a number of issues and will be in touch with the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall regarding the case in due course.

## ■ Orchestras and Theatre: Tax Allowances

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[105276\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many organisations have been waiting for more than (a) six weeks, (b) three months and (c) six months to receive (i) theatre tax relief and (ii) orchestra tax relief.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[105277\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the average length of time between organisations (a) claiming and (b) receiving (i) theatre tax relief and (ii) orchestra tax relief.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[105278\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding due to organisations through (a) theatre tax relief and (b) orchestra tax relief which was outstanding as of 7 December 2022.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[105279\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to reduce the average time period between (a) claims for and (b) payment of (i) theatre tax relief and (ii) orchestra tax relief.

### **Victoria Atkins:**

Theatre and Orchestra Tax Reliefs are Corporation Tax Reliefs available to companies that are carrying out qualifying activity.

HMRC aims to pay claims for all tax reliefs as soon as possible. Since 1 April 2022, 85 per cent of valid claims for Theatre and Orchestra Tax Reliefs have been paid within 28 days of receipt.

Where a claim is received but is identified as requiring further review, HMRC may open an enquiry and ask for additional information.

As per HMRC's published statistics, in 2021-22 £38 million of Theatre Tax Relief and £10 million of Orchestra Tax Relief was paid out.

HMRC is not able to disclose how much relief is currently outstanding to companies. This data is not available until the claims have been reviewed and HMRC is able to confirm how much payment is due.

HMRC constantly monitors payment times. It is important that these reliefs are easy to access and meet the needs of claimant organisations. However, this must be balanced against the need to ensure that taxpayer money is not paid out in respect of incorrect or fraudulent claims.

## ■ Small Businesses: Tax Allowances

**Catherine West:** [\[101036\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons the additional tax deduction for research and development costs for small and medium enterprises will be cut from 130 to 86 per cent.

**Catherine West:** [\[101037\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the additional tax deduction for R&D costs for small and medium-enterprises on those organisation's ability to (a) recruit and retain staff and (b) maintain technological equipment.

**Victoria Atkins:**

As part of the ongoing R&D tax reliefs review, as announced at the Autumn Statement, the Government is reforming the R&D tax reliefs to ensure taxpayers' money is spent as effectively as possible, to improve the competitiveness of the RDEC scheme, and take a step towards a simplified, single RDEC-like scheme for all.

The SME scheme costs twice as much as RDEC, and its cash value to firm is three times that of RDEC - yet it incentivises as little as 60p of additional R&D for each £1 spent, compared to as much as £2.70 additional R&D per £1 of RDEC. In addition, following the corporation tax rise from April 2023, the SME scheme would have become even more generous in cash terms and the Research and Development Expenditure Credit less.

There is significant error and fraud in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) scheme, with the generosity of the relief making it a target for fraud. By contrast, the separate R&D expenditure credit is better value but has a rate that is less internationally competitive.

Following these changes support for R&D investment will continue to increase, with R&D expenditure from businesses via tax credits estimated to increase from £37.2 billion in 2020-21 to around £60 billion by the end of the scorecard period, 2027-28. In addition, direct funding for R&D will reach £20 billion a year by 2024/25. From 2021-22 to 2024-25, this represents a 54 per cent cash increase in Innovate UK's budgets and 70 per cent of Innovate UK's grants to businesses go to SMEs.

The Government will consult on the design of a single scheme, and ahead of Budget work with industry to understand whether further support is necessary for R&D intensive SMEs, without significant change to the overall cost for supporting R&D.

## ■ Treasury: Energy

**Sarah Olney:** [\[104225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department has spent on energy bills in each of the last 5 years.



**James Cartlidge:**

Details of HM Treasury's energy bill spend for 1 Horse Guard's Road for 2017-18 to 2021-22 can be found in the 2021-22 Annual report and Accounts: at the following link on page 285.

[HM Treasury annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104223/2021-22-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf)

Details on the energy bills spend in the Treasury's Norwich and Darlington Offices are not readily available as this information is held by the landlord, the Government Property Agency.

■ **Treasury: Overtime****Sarah Olney:**[\[104223\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many hours of overtime were worked by officials in his Department in (a) September, (b) October and (c) November in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

We do not hold how many hours of overtime were worked by officials centrally but we can confirm the amount of overtime hours staff claimed as payment.

The total hours of overtime claimed by Treasury officials in September, October, and November in 2021 was 15,526.07 hours and in 2022 officials claiming for the same period was 8,336.44 hours

	2021	2022
Month	Hours Claimed	Hours Claimed
September	1,196.08	794.07
October	1,884.80	3,541.36
November	12,445.19	4,001.01

**Sarah Olney:**[\[104224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ask how much was paid to officials in his Department for overtime worked in (a) September, (b) October and (c) November in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

The total amount of overtime that has been paid to officials at HM Treasury is as follows: £27,091.73 in September 2021; £47,906.50 in October 2021; £309,930.07 in November 2021; £17,980.95 in September 2022; £89,771.39 in October 2022; and £114,341.55 in November 2022.

## ■ VAT: Repayments

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[101790\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December to Question 94867, how many (a) schools or (b) education trusts have received any demands for backdated VAT for each of the past five years.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Any demand for backdated VAT would be dealt with through the Local Authority as the responsible body for maintaining the school.

This information is not therefore held by HMRC. There are over 11,000 education trusts, it's a growing population that includes VAT-registered and non-VAT registered bodies.

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[101791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December to Question 94867 VAT: Repayments, what systems are in place to identify patterns of non-compliance with VAT regulations by different sectors.

**Victoria Atkins:**

HMRC uses an automated risking system to check VAT repayments before they are released for payment. Our risking system automatically checks VAT repayment claims against a range of known risk indicators. These pre-payment checks identify cases where there may be an increased risk of error or fraud.

Cases identified in this way are automatically sent to HMRC caseworkers who will then undertake further checks before deciding whether to authorise the repayment or take alternative action.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Asbestos: EU Law

**Margaret Greenwood:**

[\[104211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill on asbestos-related legislation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mims Davies:**

The regulatory framework for asbestos is provided by the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. The Regulations cover all work with asbestos that could give rise to exposure and outline controls which must be in place to prevent exposure occurring.

With the introduction of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) remains focused on ensuring that regulatory frameworks maintain the United Kingdom's high standards of health and safety protection and continue to reduce burdens for business. HSE's approach aligns

closely with the Government's pledge to do more for business to help promote growth by removing disproportionate burdens and simplifying the regulatory landscape. Our standards of health and safety protections are among the highest in the world. HSE will continue to review its retained EU Law to seek opportunities to reduce business burdens and promote growth without reducing health and safety standards.

### ■ **Bereavement Support Payment: Ex Gratia Payments**

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[105424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing an ex gratia payment scheme to make sure that all families receive the same amount of Bereavement Support Payment as they would have done if they had been married or in a civil partnership.

**Mims Davies:**

The draft Remedial Order proposes to extend Widowed Parents Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment to cohabitants who have entitlement on, or from, 30th August 2018.

It is not routine for Social Security changes to be made retrospectively and we consider that the 30 August 2018 to be a logical and fair start date. This was the date that the incompatibility for Widowed Parents Allowance was accepted as final in the Supreme Court. To use an earlier start date would bring administrative complexity and costs to the taxpayer. Equally, it would not be appropriate to set up an ex-gratia scheme.

### ■ **Bereavement Support Payment: Inflation**

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[105423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the level of Bereavement Support Payment in line with inflation since 2017.

**Mims Davies:**

The rate of Bereavement Support Payment is reviewed on a discretionary basis as part of the annual uprating process. Following this year's review, Bereavement Support Payment will stay at the current rate. This means that claimants on the standard rate will continue to receive a first payment of £2,500 and 18 monthly payments of £100, and those on the higher rate will receive £3,500 followed by 18 monthly payments of £350.

Bereavement Support Payment is intended to provide working people with short-term financial support following the death of a spouse or civil partner, to help towards the additional costs associated with a death. It is not means-tested unlike income replacement benefits such as Universal Credit, which we are increasing in line with inflation to protect the least well-off. Families needing extra financial support are protected by this welfare safety net.

**■ Carer's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance****Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[105446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claim Carer's Allowance in a household where someone else claims Employment and Support Allowance as of 06 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Carer's Allowance and Income Support****Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[105454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claim Income Support and Carer's Allowance but do not live in a household where someone else claims Employment and Support Allowance as of 6 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

**■ Carers' Benefits: Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome****Charlotte Nichols:** [\[104449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the policies announced in the Autumn Statement 2022 on parents of children who have Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder who receive Carers Benefit and Income support.

**Tom Pursglove:**

This Government recognises and values the vital contribution made by carers, in supporting some of the most vulnerable in society, including children and adults with disabilities.

Where a child with Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder is entitled to Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (or Child Disability Payment or Adult Disability Payment in Scotland), the parents may be entitled to additional support through the benefit system.

The Secretary of State announced the outcome of his statutory annual up-rating review on 17 November. All relevant benefit rates for working age households and disabled people will increase by 10.1% from next April, subject to parliamentary approval, in line with the Consumer Prices Index in the year to September 2022. This includes the rates of Income Support, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Universal Credit and Carer's Allowance, and the additional amounts for carers in Income Support and Universal Credit. For those benefits which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, but which are currently being delivered by DWP on behalf of Scottish Ministers under agency agreements, equivalent up-rating

provision will be brought forward by the Scottish Government. This includes Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance.

In addition, to ensure stability and certainty for households, the Autumn Statement announced £26 billion in cost of living support for 2023/24. This includes further Cost of Living Payments for disabled people and people in receipt of certain means-tested benefits, as well as pensioners, in addition to those being made in the current financial year. 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. This is in addition to the support provided by the amended Energy Price Guarantee, which 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 it has 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.

The Government does not intend to conduct a specific assessment of the impact of these measures with reference to the parents of children with Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder.

## ■ Children: Maintenance

**Martyn Day:**

[\[101751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of calculating child maintenance payments using income net of tax.

**Mims Davies:**

To calculate child maintenance, the Child Maintenance Service uses the paying parent's gross income before tax and national insurance but after pension contributions.

While the method of assessment is kept under review to assure fairness for both parents, at this stage, using gross income allows calculations to be made quickly and accurately as income information can be obtained easily from HM Revenue and Customs. This avoids uncertainty for both parents and potential administrative problems.

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[99986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department takes to calculate the amount of child maintenance payments owed in the UK by a person who is already paying child support for a different child overseas.

**Mims Davies:**

The calculation of child maintenance liability by the Child Maintenance Service can include an allowance for maintenance payments made in respect of a child in another country. In order to be taken into account these payments must be made under either a court order or under the powers of that country's child maintenance service. A Paying Parent will be asked about this at the point their case is set up or can report such an arrangement at a later date, they will be expected to provide documentary evidence such as a copy of the court or payment notice.

**■ Cost of Living Payments: Disability**

**Liz Twist:** [\[105574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward the second £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment to winter 2022-23.

**Tom Pursglove:**

No such assessment has been made. We will be bringing forward legislation for the 23/24 Cost of Living Payments in due course.

**■ Employment and Support Allowance: Long Covid**

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[105418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people whose main disability is long Covid have (a) registered for, (b) been assessed for, (c) been awarded and (d) had their applications rejected for Employment and Support Allowance as of 7 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on the number of Employment and Support Allowance claimants by high level medical conditions is published and can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#).

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

**■ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[104448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that people with Fetal valproate spectrum disorder can afford the deposit for an electric vehicle.

**Tom Pursglove:**

People receiving the higher rate mobility component for Disability Living Allowance (DLA), the enhanced rate of the mobility component for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), War Pension Mobility Supplement (WPMS) or Armed Forces

Independence Payment (AFIP), can choose to exchange part or all of their mobility component for a leased car, wheelchair or powered chair/scooter through the Motability scheme.

DLA and PIP are assessed on the needs arising from a long-term health condition or disability, including Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder, and claimants are free to choose how to use their benefit according to their own priorities. Motability have a grant programme which supports Motability scheme customers with grants for advance payments for vehicles (both fuel or electric) or adaptations for a vehicle to suit their needs.

### ■ **Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit: Long Covid**

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[105419]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, how many people whose main disability is Long Covid have (a) registered for, (b) been assessed for, (c) been awarded and (d) been rejected for that benefit as of 7 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on the number of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit assessments and claims by prescribed disease and cause of accident is published and can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#).

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

### ■ **Local Housing Allowance: Uprating**

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[103000]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of not uprating Local Housing Allowance on rates of (a) eviction and (b) homelessness applications in the next 12 months.

**Mims Davies:**

No assessment has been made.

The causes of homelessness are multi-faceted and often complex, they interact dynamically making it difficult to isolate the relative importance of individual factors.

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.

Government has committed to a ban on section 21 'no fault' evictions to protect tenants and will introduce a Renters Reform Bill in this Parliament.

This Government is also providing an additional £50 million, through a top up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant, for local authorities to help prevent vulnerable households from becoming homeless. This additional investment builds on the £316 million in funding already available to local authorities through the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2022/23. This is part of the £2 billion of funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years.

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.

## ■ Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[105308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans he has to (a) replace, (b) revoke or (c) retain the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

**Mims Davies:**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, as amended, make explicit the implicit requirements to manage workplace health and safety in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The Regulations outline employers' duties to manage health and safety risks including risk assessment, risk control, health and safety arrangements, health surveillance, competent health and safety advice, procedures for serious and imminent danger and information for employees.

The Regulations implement a number of provisions of EU Directives and are subject to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill 2022 (REUL Bill) currently passing through Parliament.

With the introduction of the REUL Bill, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) remains focused on ensuring that regulatory frameworks maintain the United Kingdom's high standards of health and safety protection and continue to reduce burdens for business. HSE's approach aligns closely with the Government's pledge to do more for business to help promote growth by removing disproportionate burdens and simplifying the regulatory landscape. Our standards of health and safety protections are among the highest in the world. HSE will continue to review its retained EU Law to seek opportunities to reduce business burdens and promote growth without reducing health and safety standards.



**■ Offshore Industry: Air Pollution**

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many hydrocarbon releases were reported to HSE in the first six months of 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

34 hydrocarbon releases were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in the first six months of 2022.

**■ Offshore Industry: Employment**

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether offshore employees raised concerns relating to offshore employment to (a) HSE and (b) her Department in the first six months of 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Safety Executive received a total of 11 concerns from employees at offshore sites in the first six months of 2022.

**■ Pension Credit**

**Patrick Grady:** [\[105420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people eligible for Pension Credit but who are not claiming it in each of the nations of the UK.

**Patrick Grady:** [\[105421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the total value of unclaimed pension credit in each of the nations of the UK in each of the last five years.

**Patrick Grady:** [\[105422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to increase the uptake of pension credit among those who are eligible but not claiming the benefit.

**Laura Trott:**

Estimates for Pension Credit take-up are only available at the Great Britain level. The latest statistics are in the publication: Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Pension Credit provides vital financial support to pensioners on a low income and we want all those who are eligible to claim it. That's why the Department launched a £1.2m nationwide communications campaign in April to raise awareness of Pension Credit and increase take-up. The campaign included:

- Promotion of Pension Credit on social media, via internet search engines and sponsored advertising on targeted websites that pensioners, their friends and family are likely to visit;
- Information screens in Post Offices and GP surgeries across GB;
- Advertising in regional and national newspapers and on national and local broadcast radio;
- Advertising on the sides of buses, interior bus panels and digital street displays;
- Leaflets and posters in Jobcentres, as well as digital versions which could be used by stakeholders and partners across local communities;
- Engagement with Local Authorities nationwide through the Government Communication Service local network and promotional materials to enable them to support the campaign; and
- In June, we held a second Pension Credit awareness media 'day of action' working in close collaboration with broadcasters, newspapers and other partners such as Age UK, Independent Age and the private sector to reach out to pensioners to promote Pension Credit through their channels.
- An updated digital toolkit with information and resources that any stakeholder can use to help promote Pension Credit.

This month we're undertaking a further burst of communications activity, including press and radio advertising and social media focusing on highlighting to pensioners that if they apply for Pension Credit by 18 December, it will not be too late to qualify for a £324 Cost of Living Payment – subject to Pension Credit backdating rules.

On 7 December, around 40 MPs attended a Pension Credit event at Portcullis House which I hosted. I was pleased to hear about the work that a number of MPs are already doing to help their constituents make a claim and also that others pledged to help promote Pension Credit ahead of 18 December.

In the new year, DWP will again write to over 11 million pensioners as part of the annual uprating of State Pension. The accompanying leaflet has been updated to include the prominent campaign messaging promoting Pension Credit.

## ■ **Personal Independence Payment: Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[104446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with representatives of Motability on deposits for electric vehicles for people receiving Personal Independent Payments for Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The department is responsible for the disability benefits that provide a passport to the Motability scheme. Whilst it works closely with Motability, responsibility for the terms and administration of the scheme sits with Motability and its Board of Governors.

Entitlement to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself.

Motability have a grant programme which supports Motability scheme customers with grants for advance payments for vehicles (both fuel and electric) or adaptations for a vehicle to suit their needs.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Long Covid

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[105415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people whose main disability is long Covid have (a) registered for, (b) been assessed for, (c) been awarded and (d) had their applications rejected for Personal Independence Payment as of 7 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Information on conditions is not collected at registration. However, it is available when claimants have been through assessment.

Data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims, with Long Covid as the primary condition up to July, can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#). In particular, the 'PIP clearances' dataset includes the outcomes of PIP assessments and can be broken down by disability. 'Coronavirus COVID-19' can be found under the disability subcategory 'Viral diseases' which is under the main disability category of 'Infectious disease'. Only the claimant's main disabling condition is recorded on the department's systems. Many people in receipt of PIP have more than one condition.

Data up to 7<sup>th</sup> December will be published in due course.

You can log in or access Stat-Xplore as a guest user and, if needed, you can access [guidance](#) on how to extract the information required.

## ■ Renewable Energy: Health and Safety

**Kirsty Blackman:**

[\[102856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the regulatory framework for renewable energy generation for (a) onshore and (b) offshore health & safety regimes.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has established a Net Zero Hub dedicated to reviewing the measures in place for effective regulation of Net Zero technologies. The Hub comprises Senior Managers, Policy Advisors, Operational Staff and Scientists and is underpinned by full governance arrangements including authorisation at HSE Board level.

As part of this, the suitability of existing legislation for both on and offshore wind industries will be considered.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many offshore renewable incidents met the Health and Safety Executive's Incident Selection Criteria in the first six months of 2022.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of offshore renewable incidents (a) met the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Incident Selection Criteria and (b) were investigated by HSE in the first six months of 2022.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many dangerous occurrences relating to the offshore renewables industry were reported to the Health and Safety Executive between January and June 2022.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many planned inspections of offshore renewable energy installations were made in the first six months of 2022.

**Kirsty Blackman:** [\[102862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many concerns relating to offshore employment (a) met the criteria for follow-up and (b) were investigated in the first six months of 2022.

**Mims Davies:**

In the first six months of 2022:

- 1 offshore renewable incident met the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Incident Selection Criteria, and a subsequent investigation was completed.
- There were 5 reportable dangerous occurrences related to the offshore renewables industry.
- No planned inspections were completed on offshore renewable energy installations. This is because HSE's focus was on responding to operational concerns.
- 9 concerns relating to offshore employment were reported to HSE. Of these, 6 investigations have been completed and 1 investigation is currently underway.

**■ Sleep Apnoea: Medical Equipment****Rachael Maskell:** [\[105395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department provides financial support to people with sleep apnea who use a (a) continuous positive airway pressure and (b) bilevel positive airway pressure machine for the running of that device.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The department does not provide financial support for specific items to assist people with a health condition or disability as part of their daily living needs. Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment provide a contribution towards the extra costs faced by people with a long-term health condition or disability. These benefits are assessed on the needs arising from a condition, rather than the condition itself. Claimants in receipt of one of these benefits are free to choose how to use it according to their own priorities and needs.

The Government understands the pressures people, including disabled people, are facing with the cost of living this winter, and has taken further action to support people with their energy bills. The Government's Energy Price Guarantee, running from October 2022 to March 2023, will save a typical British household around £900 this winter. This is in addition to the over £37bn of 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 eligible means-tested benefits;
- a one-off payment of £300 through, and as an addition to, the Winter Fuel Payment from November to pensioner households.

We have also announced further support for 2023-24 to support the most vulnerable households, including £26bn of new cost of living support and the uprating by 10.1% of benefits for working age households and disabled people, as well as the basic and new State Pensions.

**■ Social Security Benefits****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[102951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure people (a) have access to information relating to available benefits and (b) are aware of their potential benefits entitlements.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Department works hard to ensure that people are aware of any potential entitlement to benefit. We communicate with the public through advertising, stakeholder and employer engagement, and campaigns to help people understand their entitlement and the support we can provide as a safety net.

The Government's website, GOV.UK provides guidance on individual's rights and entitlements to benefits in the UK. The website also provides links to independent benefits calculators that can be used to find out what an individual could get, how to claim, and how these benefits will be affected if an individual starts work.

<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

In addition, DWP staff in Jobcentres provide support and advice about entitlement to benefits and will signpost citizens to appropriate information to help them.

#### ■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Long Covid**

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[105430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people whose main disability is long covid have (a) registered for, (b) been assessed for, (c) been awarded and (d) been rejected for statutory sick pay as of 7 December 2022.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Statutory Sick Pay is administered and paid by employers so this information is not recorded.

#### ■ **Unemployment**

**Alison McGovern:** [\[102948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee on 30 November 2022, HC 549, if he will publish the outcomes of research on the definitions of economically inactive groups.

**Guy Opperman:**

The independent ONS publish data on economic inactivity taken from the Labour Force Survey. The Department is examining workforce participation and economic inactivity.

#### ■ **Universal Credit: Long Covid**

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[105417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people unable to work due to long Covid have (a) applied for, (b) been assessed for, (c) been awarded and (d) had their applications rejected for Universal Credit as of 7 December 2022.

**Guy Opperman:**

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

#### ■ **Universal Credit: Overpayments**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[104306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December to Question UIN 95843, how many Universal Credit Official Error overpayments there were from 1 January 2018 to 6 December 2022.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[104307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the answer of 1 December to Question 95843, what was the total number of Universal Credit Official Error overpayments in Hounslow from 1 January 2018 to 6 December 2022.

**Seema Malhotra:**

[\[104308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will provide a breakdown of the number of Universal Credit Official Error overpayments from 1 January 2018 to 6 December 2022, broken down by region.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) pays welfare benefits to around 23 million people.

We are unable to provide information on actual Universal Credit official error overpayments referred for recovery, as there is no longer a requirement to categorise a Universal Credit overpayment, other than where fraud has occurred. Overpayment data (both estimates and actuals) is not broken down by region.

## ■ Wind Power: Health and Safety

**Kirsty Blackman:**

[\[102857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the report by MMI Engineering Ltd for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) entitled Study and development of a methodology for the estimation of the risk and harm to persons from wind turbines, RR968, published in 2013, is the most recent HSE study on the methodology for the estimation of the risk and harm to people from wind turbines.

**Mims Davies:**

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) research report '[RR968](#)' remains one of a range of studies, guidance and industry data used to assist in the evaluation of risk to people from wind turbines and operations.

Further, HSE continues to support industry in the development of industry specific guidance for this rapidly developing sector.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Lotteries: Prizes

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

[\[97652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee report on What next for the National Lottery?, published on 22 November 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of that report's recommendation that individual society lotteries should be able to set their own prizes, up to a limit of £500,000.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 1 December 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**Paul Scully:**

The maximum prize for a society lottery draw was increased in July 2020 from £400,000 to £500,000 as part of a wider package of changes to society lottery limits.

**We are carefully considering the Committee's recommendations and will respond in due course.**~~We are carefully considering the Committee's recommendation that the maximum allowable sizeable prize per draw should be £25,000 or 10% of the draw's proceeds and will respond in due course.~~

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Confucius Institutes: Higher Education

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[87856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Confucius Institutes on UK universities.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**Claire Coutinho:**

Like all similar bodies, Confucius Institutes should operate transparently and with a full commitment to the department's values of openness and freedom of expression. Universities have a responsibility to ensure that any partnership with a Confucius Institute is managed appropriately and that the right due diligence is in place. We encourage any providers with concerns to contact the department.

**The government will continue to review its measures as appropriate.**

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will address concerns about the possible influence of overseas money in higher education (HE) in **England** ~~the UK~~, without reducing the ability of our world-class universities to work with global partners.



The Bill will empower the Office for Students (OfS) to require registered HE providers to report certain overseas funding, including of educational partnerships, such as arrangements with Confucius Institutes. The Bill will also allow the OfS to take appropriate action, including issuing penalties, if there is evidence that an HE provider has breached its freedom of speech duties.

~~The department will continue to review its measures as appropriate.~~

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Ministry of Defence Contingent Liabilities

**Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):**

[\[HCWS436\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that I am today laying a Departmental Minute to advise that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has received approval from His Majesty's Treasury to recognise new contingent liabilities associated with the SKYNET 6 Programme. This Programme, as set out in the Defence Command Paper: Defence in a Competitive Age, will provide the MOD with a world class, modern Military Satellite communications network to support our and our allies' operations globally. This will be achieved through new capital investment in the ground stations, spacecraft and user terminals that form the SKYNET strategic capability. These new contingent liabilities are specifically related to the launch of our first next generation satellite, known as SKYNET 6A, which is scheduled to take place in financial year 2025/26 using a SpaceX Falcon 9 launch vehicle from Cape Canaveral. This follows four SKYNET 5 satellites (A, B, C and D) currently in orbit, which will be initially supplemented, and then incrementally replaced by 6A and a further four satellite systems being procured through the SKYNET 6 Enduring Capability (EC) project. His Majesty's Treasury approved the proposed three contingent liabilities and Chairs of the PAC and HCDC were notified on 23 June 2020.

Three contingent liabilities are recognised.

The first contingent liability relates to loss of capability of the SKYNET 6A system. The MOD will take ownership of the SKYNET 6A spacecraft at launch and has not sought to secure insurance for the launch or acceptance phases, as it was assessed as not providing value for money. The post mitigation worst-case financial exposure of risk of loss of capability related to these events, assuming the need to re-procure a spacecraft with similar capabilities, has been assessed at a value of £720 million.

The second contingent liability relates to long delay of launch. The MOD has agreed to bear the allowable costs of a launch related delay which arise for reasons entirely outside of the control of the contractor. A long launch delay would result in the MOD incurring additional storage, pre-launch insurance, maintenance, launch service provider and other delay-related allowable costs. The post mitigation worst-case financial exposure of a long launch delay has been assessed at a value of £253 million.

The third contingent liability relates to a cross-waiver of liability in favour of the SKYNET 6A launch service provider. Cross-waivers are standard practice in space launches. The MOD has agreed a cross waiver of liability in favour of SpaceX and related parties in respect of damage to Ministry of Defence property and personal injury, death or property damage incurred by Ministry of Defence employees. This liability is assessed as unquantifiable due to the nature, scope, range, and scale of possible scenarios that might occur, which means that it is not currently possible to provide a realistic estimate of cost.

**Attachments:**

1. SKYNET 6A [20221212-SKYNET 6A\_Departmental\_Minute.pdf]

**EDUCATION****■ Skills Update****Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon):**  
**[\[HCWS434\]](#)**

As part of the Government's commitment to provide a comprehensive and clear skills offer for employers and individuals, the Government has decided to integrate the Traineeship programme into 16-19 study programme and adult education provision from 1 August 2023. Integrating Traineeships into general provision means the Department for Education will no longer fund the delivery of Traineeships through a standalone national programme. All the elements of the Traineeship programme - English and maths, work experience, employability and occupational skills, and qualifications - will continue to be funded for 16-19 year olds as part of the national 16-19 study programme, and for adults through the adult education budget. This means that providers with access to funding can choose to continue to offer Traineeship programmes for young people who need support to get into work, apprenticeships or further learning.

In addition, there are other great alternative opportunities provided by other programmes such as T-levels and the T-level transition programme, Bootcamps, Apprenticeships, and Sector-Based Work Academies.

In areas where the Adult Education Budget has been devolved, Mayoral Combined Authorities and Greater London Authority will decide on how best to support young adults in their areas.

Integrating the national Traineeship programme will simplify the skills landscape making it easier to navigate for young people and employers. It will also enable employers, training providers and local authorities to tailor their programmes, as they will have greater flexibilities to design a Traineeship around the learner or business need as we will be removing the national framework which sets strict requirements on providers, in how they must deliver a Traineeship. This will better support individual learners and focus on local needs to support growth at a local level, and help young people gain the skills they need to get into apprenticeships and sustainable employment.

The Traineeship programme has been running for nearly 10 years and the number of starts has remained relatively low. To encourage growth, we introduced occupationally specific Traineeships, an employer incentive and featured Traineeships within various communications campaigns. However, the 17,400 starts achieved in the 2020/21 academic year and the 15,500 starts in 2021/22 remains a small number of starts for a nationally administered programme. It is right, therefore, that we focus our offer on our mainstream provision. This change will make it easier for young people and employers to navigate our skills offer and will enable providers to better tailor their programmes to deliver the key skills needed to drive growth in local communities.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Health Update**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Women) (Maria Caulfield):** [\[HCWS438\]](#)

In July 2021, the government published its response to the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review (the review). In this, we accepted the overarching conclusion of the review that the system failed to listen to patients, or to put patients at the centre of their care. We accepted the majority of the review's nine strategic recommendations and 50 Actions for Improvement.

We also committed to publishing an update on progress made in the following year to implement the accepted strategic recommendations and actions for improvement. I am happy to be able to publish that report today, which shows that we have made substantial progress and sets out the remaining next steps. The key points are set out below.

**Putting patient voice at the centre of patient safety**

Dr Henrietta Hughes was appointed as the first Patient Safety Commissioner in July 2022. Dr Henrietta Hughes is already championing the value of listening to patients to seek improvements to patient safety around the use of medicines and medical devices.

**Pelvic mesh**

In April 2022, the ninth specialist mesh centre opened in Bristol. Women from every region now have access to the specialist support services they need, including pain management, psychological support and surgical mesh removal. As of October 2022, over 1,900 patients had been referred for treatment.

The first annual clinical summit took place on 6 December 2022, where all 9 mesh centres came together to share best practice in setting up the centres, delivering patient-centred care, and ensuring robust data collection to support continued improvement. To ensure these centres are supporting women as intended, I have asked the Department to work with NHS England to review mesh centre outcomes and patient experience.

**Sodium valproate**

Government takes safety concerns associated with sodium valproate very seriously. Significant measures were introduced by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in 2018 to further reduce the use of valproate during pregnancy, including the introduction of the Pregnancy Prevention Programme and smaller pack sizes to encourage monthly prescribing with a pictogram/warning image on valproate packaging.

The MHRA and NHS Digital have developed the Medicines and Pregnancy Registry to improve our ability to monitor implementation and compliance with the Pregnancy Prevention Programme. This tracks all women in England who are taking NHS-prescribed valproate and identifies when they are pregnant and accessing NHS care for that pregnancy. The latest data from the registry shows that the number of pregnant women

prescribed valproate in a 6-month period has fallen from 68 women in April to September 2018, to 17 women in October 2021 to March 2022. Last year the registry was also expanded to cover other anti-epileptic drugs in addition to sodium valproate.

Existing approaches to reduce the number of pregnant women exposed to sodium valproate are important and are making a difference, but there is no room for complacency, and we still need to do more. For that reason, the independent Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) has considered a comprehensive assessment by MHRA which included input from patients and other key stakeholders and a review of the available data.

The CHM has advised that there should be greater scrutiny of the way sodium valproate is prescribed and that further risk minimisation measures are required, in particular that two specialists should independently consider and document that there is no other effective or tolerated treatment. The CHM has established an implementation group to support the safe introduction of the new measures into clinical practice. The implementation group includes representation from across the healthcare system.

The proposed new measures will be implemented over the coming months according to patient priorities so that they can be introduced safely. In the meantime, health professionals are being reminded that sodium valproate should not be used in female children and women of childbearing potential unless other treatments are ineffective or not tolerated, and the Pregnancy Prevention Plan should be closely adhered to. It is important to note that patients taking sodium valproate are strongly advised to continue to do so until reviewed by a healthcare professional.

I will also be hosting a roundtable on valproate prescribing with key stakeholders on 19 December 2022, to discuss how we can work together to further improve monitoring and compliance with the regulatory controls.

Last year we held a consultation on original pack dispensing and whole pack dispensing of medicines containing sodium valproate, which included a proposal that medicines containing sodium valproate are always dispensed in the original manufacturer's packaging. This would ensure patients, and particularly women and girls of childbearing potential, always receive the patient information leaflet with warnings about taking the medicine while pregnant. The government has considered the responses received and will shortly publish a response to the consultation.

### **Medical device information system**

Following extensive scoping work we have concluded that the best and fastest way to deliver a medical devices information system is by increasing the scope and coverage of outcome registries.

We aim to increase the scope and coverage of medical device outcome registries from 15% to 80% of high-risk procedures over the next three years. As well as device tracking the registries will include patient outcomes and patient experience, helping us deliver on wider objectives such as better information about individual consultants' performance, which was highlighted in the Paterson inquiry.

### **Declaration of interests**

The IMMDS review stated that transparency of payments made to clinicians needs to improve. We are in a piloting phase for the declaration of doctor's interests in NHS and independent settings. Healthcare providers will publish this information to ensure it is more accessible to patients.

During the pilot, we will seek feedback from healthcare providers, doctors, and patients on the feasibility and cost of establishing and maintaining systems across different healthcare settings; the content of standardised templates and guidance; and the accessibility of information for patients. Full implementation will begin in 2023. Once we have a system in place for doctors, we will consider systems for other healthcare professionals.

### **Next steps**

We know there is more work to do to improve women's experiences of the healthcare system, and patient safety. The government is committed to continuing to work with partners across the health and care system to implement the accepted recommendations and actions for improvement.

The review also brought into sharp focus the importance of listening to women's voices and was a key driver behind the decision to develop the first ever Women's Health Strategy for England, which we published this summer. Through the Women's Health Strategy, we will continue to improve the health and wellbeing of women and girls.

## **LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**

### **Local Government Update**

**Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove):**

[\[HCWS437\]](#)

Today the Government has published details on the Local Government Finance Settlement for the next two years for English councils, which prioritises protecting local tax payers and vital core services. Local government has long called for greater certainty on funding following repeated one-year settlements, greater local control of finances, and a focus on social care. This two-year policy statement delivers on all of these fronts.

The Government estimates that on average councils will see an increase of around 9% in their funding next year. We have delivered on the sector's requests for additional funding through the £2.8 billion announced at the Autumn Statement for social care. We are also ensuring that this year's Settlement provides support across all tiers of local government through a new, one-off funding guarantee that ensures all local authorities will see a minimum 3% increase in their Core Spending Power before taking any local decisions on council tax levels. Councils are best placed to make local decisions to meet pressures and ensure that our most vulnerable in society get the support they need, and therefore it is for individual local authorities to determine the level of flexibility they use in setting

council tax. The policy statement confirms a core referendum principle of up to 3% for both 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The Government's manifesto commits to continuing to protect local taxpayers from excessive council tax increases, and it is for the House of Commons to set an annual threshold at which a council tax referendum is triggered. This is an additional local democratic check and balance to avoid the repeat seen under the last Labour Government when council tax more than doubled. This package of referendum principles strikes a fair balance. The council tax referendum provisions are not a cap, nor do they force councils to set taxes at the threshold level. Councillors, mayors, police and crime commissioners and local councils will rightly want to consider the financial needs of local residents at this challenging point in time, alongside the public's support for action on keeping our streets safe and providing key services.

The Mayor of London has requested flexibility to levy an additional £20 on Band D bills to the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept to provide extra funding for Transport for London (TfL). The Government has expressed ongoing concern about the management of TfL by this Mayor, and it is disappointing that London taxpayers are having to foot the bill for the GLA's poor governance and decision-making. Whilst the Government will not oppose this request, any decision to increase the precept is solely one for the Mayor, who should take into account the pressures that Londoners are currently facing on living costs and his decision to raise council tax by 9.5% last year.

This will be a settlement that also recognises the importance of funding adult social care by confirming significant additional funding for social care. Additionally, for social care authorities, the Government will consult on a 2% precept, for both 2023-24 and 2024-25. When taking decisions on council tax levels, local authorities should recognise the pressures many households are facing.

In addition, the policy statement has set out key assumptions behind the second year of the settlement. This includes confirming that the Review of Relative Needs and Resources and a reset to Business Rates growth will not be implemented in the next two years, to give councils more certainty for budget planning. For 2024-25, the policy statement refers to the significant new funding stream expected from the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging scheme.

Finally, we are encouraging local authorities to consider whether they can use their reserves to maintain services in the face of immediate inflationary pressures, taking account, of course, of the need to maintain appropriate levels of reserves to support councils' financial sustainability and future investment. The Government notes the significant increase in some local authority reserves over the two years of the pandemic.

All of the proposals set out in the policy statement will be subject to the usual consultation process within the Local Government Finance Settlement.

This Written Ministerial Statement covers England only.

## ■ Update on the Community Ownership Fund

**Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison):**

[\[HCWS435\]](#)

Over the weekend I was delighted to announce the outcome of Round 2 Window 1 of the £150 million Community Ownership Fund, which will see £6.7 million awarded to 32 projects across the United Kingdom. Combined with Round 1 projects, this additional funding takes our overall funding total to £16.7 million for 70 projects. The full list of successful applicants can be found [here](#).

This targeted support is delivering much needed investment to ensure that important parts of our social fabric, such as pubs, sports clubs, theatres and post office buildings, can continue to play a central role in towns and villages across the United Kingdom. In this round we will be funding a diverse range of projects, from the Margaret Haes Riding Centre in Bury to the Llandyrnog Community Shop in the Vale of Clwyd.

The Community Ownership Fund is helping to reduce geographical disparities across the United Kingdom. To this end, the funding provided in Round 2 Window 1 will see over £800,000 awarded to projects in Scotland, £1.1 million to Wales and £555,000 to Northern Ireland. This, so far, brings the total funding awarded across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to £4.9 million collectively.

The funding provided in Round 2 Window 1 will also see £4.2 million awarded to projects in England. This brings the total funding awarded across English regions to £11.8 million collectively.

The projects supported by the Community Ownership Fund, such as the United Kingdom's most remote pub, The Old Forge in Scotland, Ballymacash Sports Academy in Northern Ireland, and the Leigh Spinners Mill in Greater Manchester, are already making a genuine difference to their communities. With the additional investment awarded in this bidding window, I am delighted to be supporting many more small but mighty local assets across the United Kingdom, levelling up the places we love and cherish.

Interested groups can submit [an Expression of Interest form](#) to start their application process at any time. With a 4-year window until 2024/25 for investment to be released, there is plenty of opportunity for interested community groups to apply to take over invaluable community assets and to run them as businesses – by the community, for the community.