



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:13 P.M., 09 January 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Alternative Fuel Payments

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[112122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to policy paper, How households and businesses will be supported by the Energy Prices Bill, what estimate his Department has made of the potential level of arrears households have accrued while awaiting payments from the Alternative Fuel Payment Alternative Fund since the announcement of that fund.

**Graham Stuart:**

Since publication of the referenced policy paper, the Government has doubled support for alternatively fuelled households in recognition of the cost-of-living pressures caused by these rising fuel costs. This support will be available in February.

The Government is monitoring prices over the coming months and will consider further intervention if required to protect UK households from extraordinary fuel prices.

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[112123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to finalise plans for the distribution of Alternative Fuel Payments for people who live in off-grid properties.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is providing a £200 Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) to help those households in Great Britain which use alternative fuels such as biomass or heating oil to meet energy costs this winter. Most households eligible for the AFP support in Great Britain, such as those in off-grid properties, will receive payment automatically via their electricity supplier in February. Those households that will need to apply for the AFP, for example because they do not have a relationship with an electricity supplier, will be able to do so in February.

#### ■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Reviews

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[113215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria his Department has put in place to assess whether charities will receive support with their energy bills after 31 March 2023.

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[113216]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many meetings his Department has had with the Civil Society team in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on its review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[113217]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many meetings his Department has had with charities on its review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

HM Treasury is leading the review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. To support this review, BEIS has had 13 direct meetings with an estimated 20 charity organisations. Colleagues from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport also have regular meetings with stakeholders from the civil society sector, through which additional evidence and insight has been submitted to HM Treasury.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate

**Helen Morgan:**

**[112204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that residents of a property that uses combined domestic and commercial energy supplies under a business tariff will receive energy bill support for the domestic element of their energy use.

**Graham Stuart:**

Where a commercial contract is used to provide energy in a building that is also used for residential use, support under the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) applies to all energy use in the property. EBRS provides a discount on the wholesale portion of the unit price for gas and electricity to ensure that eligible businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period. This support under the EBRS is comparable to the wholesale element of the Energy Price Guarantee for households.

**Stephen Doughty:**

**[113380]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answers of 24 October 2022 and 29 November 2022 to Questions 65799 and 98830 on Energy Bills Rebate, what progress his Department has made on finalising the details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund for people without a domestic electricity contract; and whether those people have now received payments.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 19 December, the Government announced details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vital-help-with-energy-bills-on-the-way-for-millions-more-homes-across-great-britain-and-northern-ireland>.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will open for applications in Great Britain in January 2023. However, the exact date that an eligible household will receive support will depend on when the application is made and when the payment can be processed by the relevant local authority.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Northern Ireland**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[113199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his planned timetable is for the £600 energy payment to households in Northern Ireland to (a) begin to be paid and (b) be concluded.

**Graham Stuart:**

On 19th December, the Government announced that all households in Northern Ireland will receive support with their energy bills this winter through a single payment of £600. This is made up of £400 of the Energy Bills Support Scheme and £200 of the Alternative Fuel Payment. This will be delivered through electricity suppliers, with payments starting in January and concluding as soon as is reasonably practicable.

■ **Energy Supply: Ukraine**

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[112121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with manufacturers of power distribution products on (a) supply chain support for products needed by Ukraine and (b) ensuring provision of those products to Ukraine.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department of International Trade is working with relevant industry associations and the UK supply chain to identify where UK expertise and equipment can be provided to help with vital repair of Ukraine's energy supply infrastructure. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are working with the Ukrainian Government and Energy Community Secretariat to deliver these products.

■ **Energy: Meters**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[112160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will instruct Ofgem to require energy companies to halt all new installations of prepayment meters, including remote switching of smart meters.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ofgem is the independent regulator and is directly accountable to Parliament. The Government has no plans to instruct Ofgem to halt all new installations of prepayment meters. Ofgem requires specific protections for vulnerable consumers and those in payment difficulty. Prepayment meters are only installed if it is 'safe and reasonably practicable' to do so. Prepayment meters enable customers to control and



budget for the amount they spend and help mitigate the risk of going into, or exacerbating, existing debt.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[112161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with energy companies on maintaining prepayment meter connections in winter 2022-23.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government expects suppliers to take proactive steps to ensure that customers on prepayment meters remain connected this winter. Under Ofgem's licence conditions, energy suppliers have an obligation to identify self-disconnecting and self-rationing Prepayment Meter customers and offer additional support.

Under Ofgem's rules, energy suppliers are required to agree repayment rates with a customer in arrears. Suppliers must consider the customer's ability to pay when calculating repayment rates for those in debt or at risk of self-disconnection.

Suppliers are also expected to provide extra support by making emergency and friendly-hours credit available to all prepayment meter customers to ensure everyone remains connected this winter.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[112162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidelines the Government has issued to energy companies on the forcible installation of prepayment energy meters; and what assessment has he made of the compatibility of forcible installations with the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Graham Stuart:**

The energy regulator Ofgem has rules in place that restrict the force-fitting of a prepayment meter on customers who are in debt, except as a last resort. Forcible installations of prepayment meters for vulnerable customers have been banned by Ofgem since 2017.

Licensees in the gas and electricity markets are obliged to comply with the relevant Ofgem licence conditions, which are created and revised with regard to the relevant acts of parliament.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[113279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and (b) directors of public health on the potential health impact of self-disconnection of prepayment meters in winter 2022; and what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of expected levels of self-disconnection of prepayment meters in winter 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

Discussions have not taken place. The Government has reaffirmed its commitment for this winter and has put in place immediate support including the Energy Price

Guarantee. Prepayment meter customers will automatically receive the same discount per unit of energy as other customers through the Energy Price Guarantee. Prepayment meter customers are also receiving the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount which is being provided in instalments from October to March.

Ofgem's rules require energy suppliers to identify and support prepayment meter customers at risk of self-disconnection through the provision of emergency credit and additional support credit. Ofgem has recently undertaken a Market Compliance Review assessing how suppliers support customers in vulnerable situations, including those on prepayment meters. Ofgem has started compliance engagement with suppliers and asked them to take action to address the weaknesses that have been identified.

## ■ Flexible Working

**Patrick Grady:** [112114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to support flexible working arrangements for (a) parents, (b) people with disabilities and (c) older people.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

On 5 December the Government published the response to the consultation "Making flexible working the default"[1]. This committed to make a number of changes to the existing Right to Request Flexible Working, including making it apply from the first day of employment. It also committed the Government to issue a call for evidence on non-contractual and ad hoc flexible working. These steps will support parents, people with disabilities and older workers who wish to remain in or return to work.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default>

## ■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme: Lancaster and Fleetwood

**Cat Smith:** [111625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes were retrofitted as a result of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme in Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency as of 31 October 2022.

**Graham Stuart:**

Eighty-seven homes have been upgraded in the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency through the [Local Authority Delivery Schemes](#). These figures use data from the [latest November statistics release](#).

## ■ Heat Pumps

**Bill Esterson:** [112083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make a comparative assessment of the effectiveness of heat pumps in (a) Victorian properties and (b) terraced houses built between the 1930s and 1990s.

**Graham Stuart:**

BEIS analysis indicates that it would be feasible to install heat pumps in most homes, based on their current energy efficiency and internal fuse limits. This is reinforced by the recent Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project, where heat pumps have been successfully installed across all housing types. Performance data from the project will be published in due course.

**■ Help to Grow Schemes****Seema Malhotra:**[\[113307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have (a) expressed interest in, (b) enrolled in and (c) completed the Help to Grow Management scheme in (i) each English region, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland since August 2021.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Help to Grow schemes have supported over 5,000 businesses so far. We will release data on the uptake of both the Help to Grow schemes in due course after Help to Grow Digital has closed.

**Seema Malhotra:**[\[113308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department had with relevant stakeholders prior to the decision to close the Help to Grow: Digital Programme in February 2023.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Department has had ongoing and regular engagement with relevant stakeholders throughout the life of the Help to Grow Digital Programme. Help to Grow Digital has supported businesses to grow, but with take-up lower than expected, the government cannot justify the continued cost of the scheme to the taxpayer.

The Government continues to support small businesses, such as through Help to Grow: Management and the government-backed British Business Bank's Start Up Loans, which are available to help aspiring entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses.

**■ Help to Grow Schemes: Costs****Seema Malhotra:**[\[113305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the cost to the public purse has been of the Help to Grow: Digital programme since March 2021.

**Seema Malhotra:**[\[113306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many SMEs have received discounts on digital products through the Help to Grow: Digital programme since March 2021.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Full details on the take up of the Help to Grow: Digital scheme will be released in due course once the scheme has fully closed.

**■ Hydrogen: Production****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[112037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the potential volumes of electrolytic hydrogen production that could be sourced from energy from waste facilities; and if she will take steps to develop policy frameworks to help enable investment in low carbon hydrogen production from energy from waste.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[112038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to assess and support alternative pathways for low carbon hydrogen not considered in this year's Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard, such as electrolytic hydrogen from energy from waste, ahead of the planned update to the Standard next year.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government considered the potential value of hydrogen production from waste in the July UK Hydrogen Strategy Update to Market. Projects seeking to produce electrolytic hydrogen using energy from waste are already able to apply for support where they can show they meet the current Low Carbon Hydrogen Standard. The Government is considering this production route as it supports UK domestic production, including the appropriate carbon accounting regime under future iterations of the Standard.

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[112039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funding has his Department allocated towards the development of electrolytic hydrogen production from energy facilities.

**Graham Stuart:**

Low carbon hydrogen is critical to energy security, presents a significant growth opportunity and will help the UK reach its net zero target. BEIS has launched a joint Hydrogen Production Business Model and Net Zero Hydrogen Fund allocation round for electrolytic projects, with contracts due to be awarded in 2023. The Government aims to support projects deploying at the earliest opportunity, with up to 1GW electrolytic hydrogen in construction or operation by 2025 and up to 10GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

## ■ Local Government: Carbon Emissions

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[902985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by UK100 on Local Net Zero Delivery Progress Report: Local Powers.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Net Zero Strategy sets out the Government's commitments to enable local areas to deliver net zero as it recognises that local authorities can, and do, play an essential role in driving local climate action.

UK100's Local Net Zero Delivery Progress Report forms part of a growing body of evidence and views on Local Net Zero.

## ■ Post Offices: Energy Bill Relief Scheme

**Dame Meg Hillier:**

[\[108108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support Post Offices after the end of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

HM Treasury is currently conducting a review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and evidence from post offices is included in that which 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 later this month.

## ■ Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[113207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of a reduction in the Universal Service Obligation to five days with no Saturday deliveries on the Post Office and sub-postmasters.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government has no current plans to change the statutory minimum requirements of the universal postal service, set out in the Postal Services Act 2011, which requires letter deliveries to every UK address, six days a week at standard price.

There is a clear and transparent process for how changes to the universal postal service should be considered and any change would need to be made through secondary legislation and agreed by Parliament.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution****Emily Thornberry:**[\[112075\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December to Question 107062 on Cabinet Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, which Minister made the overseas visit referred to in that answer; and to which country did that visit take place.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The transaction was for PCR testing for the COP26 President, Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, and five staff members during a ministerial visit to Jamaica, as part of his work to deliver the UK's COP objectives.

**■ Cabinet Office: Procurement****Emily Thornberry:**[\[112073\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to his Department's publication of spend control approvals data for July to September 2022, where the taxi ranks building work approved for procurement on 13 July 2022 will take place; and what the purpose of that work will be.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[112074\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to his Department's publication of spend control approvals data for July to September 2022, what the nature and purpose are of the activity approved for procurement in relation to (a) workplace facilities on 15 July 2022 and (b) workplace performance on 22 July 2022.

**Alex Burghart:**

The work approved on 13 July refers to the Building Works and Projects, which will be used for the provision of building works to support a greater focus on Life Cycle Replacement (LCR) and Net Carbon Zero (NCZ) projects throughout the Government Property Agency (GPA)'s office estate in England. The term 'taxi rank' is used to refer to the manner in which small contracts are awarded which reflects a 'next in line' process.

The activity approved for procurement on 15 July is for the provision of hard and soft facilities management for the GPA Estate where needed. These procurements are to appoint suppliers from multiple lots, resulting in six regionally structured contracts for the provision of these services.

The activity approved for procurement on 22 July is for a company to provide a management service for our facilities management supply chain. This centralised performance management function will manage the flow of data and the performance of the supply chain on behalf of the GPA.

## ■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Cybercrime

**Ben Everitt:**

[\[114819\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Joint Cybersecurity Advisory Alert AA22-257A, published on 14 September 2022 which states that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have attempted cyber attacks on UK critical national infrastructure in 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

We do not comment on individual cyber incidents. The government's approach to tackling cyber threats is set out in the National Cyber Strategy (2022), including detecting, disrupting and deterring state, criminal and other malicious cyber actors and activities against the UK. The strategy also sets out our ambition for improvements in the cyber resilience of critical national infrastructure, which includes being more prepared to respond to and recover from incidents, better incident planning and regular exercising.

## ■ UK Trade with EU

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[111511\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Article 210 of the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, what assessment he has made of the steps taken by the European Union to identify ways to expand access to and use of public government information for (a) all businesses and (b) small and medium sized enterprises since that agreement came into effect.

**Alex Burghart:**

The UK is at the forefront of a global movement centred on demonstrating the value of open data to economic growth and how this can be used effectively, creatively and responsibly. We share best practice with European and international partners including the Open Government Partnership of 77 countries, the G8 and the OECD Open Government Data project. We will assess the European Union's latest approaches to open data and the re-use of public sector information as part of our ongoing strategy.

## DEFENCE

## ■ Armed Forces: Housing

**John Healey:**

[\[113168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603 on Annington Homes, what percentage of Reactive Maintenance Service Requests were correctly triaged and passed to Regional Accommodation Maintenance Service suppliers.

**Alex Chalk:**

In line with the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Accommodation contracts, comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) statistics are not published for the initial six month bedding-in period as there is insufficient quality assured data.

KPI data will be available for Q3 (October - December) from 15 January 2023.

I will write to the right hon. Member in due course and place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.

**John Healey:**[\[113169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603, what proportion of Reactive Maintenance Service Requests must be correctly triaged and passed to Regional Accommodation Maintenance Service supplies for Pinnacle group to meet the relevant Key Performance Indicator.

**Alex Chalk:**

99% of Reactive Maintenance Service Requests must be correctly triaged and passed to Regional Accommodation Maintenance Service supplies for Pinnacle Group to meet the relevant Key Performance Indicator.

**John Healey:**[\[113170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603 on Annington Homes, what percentage of Emergency Response notifications are passed to Regional Accommodation Maintenance Service suppliers within 10 minutes.

**John Healey:**[\[113171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603 on Annington Homes, what proportion of Emergency Response notifications must be passed to Regional Accommodation Maintenance Service suppliers within 10 minutes for Pinnacle Group to meet the relevant Key Performance Indicator.

**Alex Chalk:**

In line with the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Accommodation contracts, comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) statistics are not published for the initial six month bedding-in period as there is insufficient quality assured data.

KPI data will be available for Q3 (October - December) from 15 January 2023.

I will write to the right hon. Member in due course and place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.



**■ Armed Forces: Vehicles****John Healey:**[\[113167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many low speed vehicles will be purchased under the terms of the contract agreed with the Bahrain International Golf Course Company on 13 December under procurement reference 338450/1158186; and for what purpose they will be used.

**Alex Chalk:**

Following market engagement activity in Bahrain, UK Strategic Command leased, not purchased, three low speed electric vehicles. These vehicles are required to transport personnel around the naval facilities in Bahrain due to the environmental conditions and are used solely for that purpose. The vehicles are more suitable than alternatives, owing to the low- speed road network of the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain and the adjacent US Naval Support Facility.

**■ HMS Collingwood: Repairs and Maintenance****John Healey:**[\[113210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many maintenance issues relating to heating and hot water have been reported at HMS Collingwood in each month since January 2021.

**Alex Chalk:**

There have been 393 maintenance issues relating to heating and hot water at HMS Collingwood since February 2022. The breakdown of the 393 can be found in the following table:

MONTH	REPORTED ISSUES
February	23
March	39
April	22
May	40
June	17
July	15
August	21
September	36
October	40
November	80
December	60

MONTH	REPORTED ISSUES
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>

Amey were previously responsible for maintenance of the Defence Estate, information pre-February 2022 is not held by the Ministry of Defence.

#### ■ Military Aid

**John Healey:**

[\[111535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which Government Departments and Devolved Administrations submitted military aid to the civil authorities requests in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

**James Heappey:**

Defence had Military Aid to Civilian Authorities requests submitted from the following Departments and Devolved Administrations for the years 2019-2022.

2019:

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
BEIS	2
Cabinet Office	7
DCMS	2
DEFRA	8
DfT	1
Home Office	33
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	8
Northern Ireland Office	2

2020:

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
BEIS	7
Cabinet Office	11
DEFRA	1
DfE	1

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
DfT	1
Department for Health and Social Care	136
FCDO	1
Government of Jersey	1
Home Office	54
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	35
MoJ	4
Northern Ireland Office	10
Scotland Office	7
Scottish Government	10
States of Jersey	1
Wales Office	20
Welsh Government	3

2021:

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
BEIS	9
Cabinet Office	21
DCMS	2
DfT	6
Department for Health and Social Care	106
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	4
FCDO	5
Home Office	84
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	22

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
MoJ	1
Northern Ireland Office	15
Scotland Office	11
Scottish Government	20
Wales Office	2
Welsh Government	11

2022:

DEPARTMENT	REQUESTS
Cabinet Office	2
DCMS	7
DEFRA	1
DfT	3
Department for Health and Social Care	18
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	1
Home Office	42
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	1
Northern Ireland Office	10
Scotland Office	5
Scottish Government	5
Welsh Government	3

**John Healey:**

**[111536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military aid to the civil authorities requests were supported by the MOD in (a) 2019, (b) 2020; (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

**James Heappey:**

Defence received and supported a total of 783 Military Aid to Civil Authority requests between the years of 2019 and 2022. These are broken down by year as; 2022-98. 2021-319. 2020-303. 2019-63

**■ Military Bases: Heating****Mr Kevan Jones:****[113208]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, during what periods (a) heating and (b) hot water not been available at (i) HMS Raleigh, (ii) Commando Training Centre Lympstone, (iii) HMS Sultan (iv) HMS Collingwood v) CHOM, YHOM, DOM and No1 Mess RAFC Cranwell, (vi) RAF Halton (vii) Catterick Garrison, (viii) RAF Cosford and (ix) Stonehouse Barracks since January 2021.

**Alex Chalk:**

This information is not held in the format requested.

The table below details the number of incidents relating to loss of heating and/or hot water for buildings on each of the sites requested since the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Built Estate contracts went live on 1 February 2022 (South West and Central regions) and 1 April 2022 (SE region) respectively.

A further breakdown of these figures cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate costs.

HMS Raleigh	121
Commando Training Centre Lympstone	86
HMS Sultan	357
HMS Collingwood	230
CHOM, YHOM, DOM and No1 Mess RAFC Cranwell	8
RAF Halton	244
Catterick Garrison	102
RAF Cosford	143
Stonehouse Barracks	349

In line with the FDIS Built Estate contracts, contractors are obliged to respond to the loss of heating immediately to make buildings safe, and within 12 hours to restore functionality for certain asset types, including Single Living Accommodation. For less operationally critical buildings, functionality should be restored within five working days.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution****Emily Thornberry:****[114577]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is his Department's policy that government procurement cards should not be used for purchases (a) of alcohol and (b) that could be made via an alternative compliant purchasing route.

**Alex Chalk:**

Policy governing the use of Electronic Procurement Cards (EPC) does not specifically prohibit the purchase of alcohol, but rather such purchases are subject to wider Ministry of Defence policy, rules and guidance, which place strict limits on the provision of alcohol at public expense.

It is the Department's policy that the EPC should not be used for purchases which could be procured via alternative routes, such as existing contracts or agreements, or where it is not suitable for the requirement, including more complex or higher value goods and services.

**■ Pinnacle Group: Contracts****Mr Kevan Jones:****[113209]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what criteria Pinnacle was awarded its current DIO contracts; and what means are available to cancel the contract on the basis of non-delivery of service level agreements.

**Alex Chalk:**

The criteria used to award the current Defence Infrastructure Organisation contract to Pinnacle was the Most Economically Advantageous Tender.

The Invitation to Tender documents were published on the Gov.UK Contract Finder website and this document contains the full tender evaluation process including the criteria. Please follow the link below to view the document and the award criteria:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/162b6550-62cc-4437-aba4-8cd6d3b71ae1>

**■ Prime Minister: Staff****Patrick Grady:****[113309]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Question 108257 on Prime Minister: Staff, if he will publish (a) a list of post-holders and (b) the dates of service of those post-holders for Military Assistants to the Prime Minister since 2010.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

For data protection and security reasons, the Ministry of Defence does not publish the names of Military Assistants to the Prime Minister.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Data Protection and Digital Information Bill****Catherine West:**[\[112139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Leader of the House on her planned timetable for the second reading of the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on Monday 18 July 2022 and following the election of the new leader of the Conservative Party, Ministers are further considering the Bill.

We are working with businesses and other stakeholders, at speed, to ensure that the Bill maximises our post-Brexit opportunity, and as mentioned in the Secretary of State's conference speech, the Bill seeks to retain our data adequacy decision so businesses can trade freely.

The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill will continue its passage in due course.

**■ Internet: Health Education****Ben Everitt:**[\[114823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that age restrictions implemented by the Online Safety Bill will not reduce online access to (a) sexual health and (b) LGBT+ educational resources.

**Paul Scully:**

Under the child safety duties in the Bill, services which are likely to be accessed by children will only be required to protect children from content and activity that meets the Bill's definition of content that is harmful to children. This is content of a kind which presents a material risk of significant harm to an appreciable number of children in the UK. This would not include content that is designed to educate and inform children, such as content on sexual health and LGBT+ educational resources.

In addition, content will only meet the definition of pornographic content in the Bill if it is produced solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal. Part 5 of the Bill, which imposes restrictions for children in relation to pornographic content published or displayed by online providers, will not require providers to block children's access to content where it is reasonable to assume that the content was created principally for educational reasons.

## ■ Sports: LGBT+ People

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[113462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make it her policy only to back bids for major sporting events from nations which uphold LGBT+ rights.

**Stuart Andrew:**

Sport operates independently of the government, therefore the government does not back bids from other nations for major sporting events.

The Government has frank conversations at international level with our counterparts around the world on human rights issues, including LGBT rights, and we will continue to have those conversations.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Adult Education

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[114751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact on local economies of the number of people undertaking adult learning at FE colleges.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). This budget totals £1.34 billion in the 2022/23 financial year. The AEB fully funds, or co-funds, skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3 qualifications. This supports adults to gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

In 2022/23 the government has devolved approximately 60% of the AEB to 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. Devolution enables MCAs and the GLA to use the AEB to shape education and skills provision in a way that best fits the needs of their residents and local economy.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for funding learners in England that are resident outside the devolved areas. In 2021/22, 1,007,400 learners participated in AEB-funded learning.

The Unit for Future Skills is supporting decision making at the local level, including the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), by providing information on local employment and skills in a single, accessible place via a public dashboard. The dashboard provides up to date data on learners undertaking further education



(FE) courses, local jobs and employment, and local enterprises. This can be accessed here: <https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/>.

The LSIPs place employers at the heart of local skills systems and facilitate direct and more dynamic working arrangements between employers, FE colleges and other skills providers. Once developed, LSIPs will set out the priorities for a local area to make technical education and skills training more responsive to employers' needs and to help people develop the skills they need to get good jobs.

## ■ Carers: Cost of Living

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[113449]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the adequacy of Government support for kinship families for (a) household bills and (b) other areas.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department recognises the important role that kinship carers play in looking after children through kinship arrangements, and are aware that many kinship carers make great sacrifices to fulfil this role.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care made a set of bold and ambitious recommendations which seek to improve the financial and practical support kinship carers receive, and the department is due to respond to those recommendations early in early 2023.

Statutory guidance issued to local authorities already makes it clear that children and young people should receive the sufficient support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare. There is no limit on the level of support, including financial support, that local authorities can provide. All local authorities should have in place clear eligibility criteria in relation to the provision of support services.

## ■ Childcare: Finance

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[113411]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to increase the funding rate for the 15 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 years olds.

**Claire Coutinho:**

In the 2021 Spending Review, the department announced additional funding for early years of £160 million in 2022/23, £180 million in 2023/24 and £170 million in 2024/25, compared to the 2021/22 financial year.

The department has recently announced that we will invest an additional £20 million into early years funding in 2023/24, on top of the additional £180 million for 2023/24 announced in the Spending Review. Taken together, this will help support providers at a national level with the additional National Living Wage costs associated with delivering the free childcare entitlements next year.

With this additional £20 million investment, in 2023/24 local authorities are set to receive average funding increases of 3.4% for the 3- and 4-year-old free childcare entitlements and 4% for the 2- year-old entitlement, compared to their 2022/23 rates.

The department will increase the Early Years Pupil Premium, which for 2023/24 will provide up to £353 per eligible child per year to support better outcomes for disadvantaged 3- and 4-year- olds, and also the Disability Access Fund, which will be worth at least £828 per eligible 3 – 4-year-old child per year. We will also be investing an additional £10 million into Maintained Nursery School supplementary funding from 2023/24.

### ■ Children: Care Homes

**Helen Hayes:** [\[114668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of how many multi-building children's homes opened in the last year; and what estimate she has made of how many children have been placed in such a home in the last year.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Ofsted hold this data and have provided the department with the information that they have registered 6 multi-builds, all the same provider. Each can accommodate between 4 to 6 children. Ofsted do not hold occupancy figures.

### ■ Children: Nutrition

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[114543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure that children in Huddersfield receive the necessary nutritional support from educational bodies.

**Nick Gibb:**

The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided by schools. Compliance with the Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools, including academies and free schools.

The Government spends over £1 billion annually delivering free school meals (FSM) to pupils in schools. Around 1.9 million disadvantaged pupils are eligible for FSM, as well as an additional 1.25 million infants who receive a free meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM) policy. Together, this provides support to over one third of all pupils in schools.

Schools also provide children in Key Stage 1 with a free piece of fruit or vegetable each day through the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, jointly funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education.

In February 2022, the Levelling Up White Paper outlined what the Department is doing to strengthen adherence with the School Food Standards. This includes piloting work with the Food Standards Agency, investing up to £200,000 in a pilot Governor

Training Scheme, and encouraging schools to complete a statement on their school websites which sets out their whole school approach to food.

The Department is investing up to £30 million in the national school breakfast programme until the end of the 2024 summer term. This funding will support up to 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low income families will be offered free, nutritious breakfasts. The Department is also investing over £200 million a year in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which provides free holiday club places with healthy meals and enriching activities to children from low income families.

The National Curriculum sets the expectation that pupils are taught about the importance of healthy eating and nutrition. This is covered in the design and technology curriculum in Key Stages 1 to 3. The principles of a healthy and varied diet are also covered in health education, which became compulsory in state funded schools in England from September 2020.

Since September 2015, Ofsted inspectors look at how a school's curriculum supports pupils' knowledge on how to keep themselves healthy, including through exercising and healthy eating. The Department has also introduced a new food preparation and nutrition GCSE to teach pupils practical cookery and the underlying scientific concepts of nutrition and healthy eating.

The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age five. There is a requirement within the EYFS that states where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. It is up to early years providers to ensure they are meeting this requirement.

## ■ English Language: Education

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[113410]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of providers of English for Speakers of Other Languages.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department understands that language skills are crucial to help people integrate into life in England, as well as to break down barriers to work and enable career progression. The department funds English for Speakers of Other Languages provision for eligible adults aged 19 and over through the Adult Education Budget (AEB).

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority. These authorities are now responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for funding eligible learners resident outside of these areas. Most of the AEB that is managed by the ESFA is allocated to grant funded providers including further education colleges, local authorities, higher education institutes, and specialist designated institutions. Where a provider that directly receives AEB or 16 to 19 ESFA/department funding can evidence that it would enhance the quality of the learner offer they may subcontract to another delivery organisation. Directly funded providers are required to undertake thorough due diligence checks when appointing any delivery subcontractor and must comply with the department's subcontracting rules.

The 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review has made available an extra £1.6 billion for 16-19 education in 2024/25, compared with 2021/22. This is the biggest increase in funding for a decade.

In support of local authorities' statutory duty to secure provision in a local area, the department will consider their requests to fill a gap in provision. Where evidenced gaps cannot be filled through negotiation with good existing providers, they are put out to tender through open competition.

## ■ Free School Meals

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [113298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent estimate of the number of children in poverty in Birmingham who are not eligible for free school meals.

**Beth Winter:** [113472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of children living in (a) relative and (b) absolute low income who are not eligible for free school meals.

**Beth Winter:** [113473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children living in (a) relative and (b) absolute low income are not eligible for free school meals in each constituency.

**Beth Winter:** [113474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the eligibility criteria for free school meals before the beginning of the next school year.

**Nick Gibb:**

Education, including free school meals (FSM), is a devolved matter and the response outlines the information for England only.

The latest published statistics from the Department are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. The figures show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming FSM. This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy,

over one third of school children are now provided with FSM, at a cost of over £1 billion a year. The Department currently has protections in place, ensuring that eligible pupils keep their FSM entitlement even if their household circumstances improve.

The Department believes that the current eligibility threshold level, which enables children in low income households to benefit from FSM while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one. The Department will continue to keep FSM eligibility under review to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them, as well as continuing to monitor current issues that impact disadvantaged families, such as the rising cost of living, and its impact on FSM.

### ■ Pupils and Students: Cost of Living

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[114748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of increases in the cost of living on educational attainment.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted pupils and their families. The Department is working hard to manage the current pressures facing schools and continue to monitor the financial health of schools closely.

Schools will receive an additional £2 billion in 2023/24 and 2024/25 as a result of the 2022 Autumn Statement. The core schools budget has risen from £49.8 billion in 2021/22 to £53.8 billion in 2022/23, and will continue to rise to £57.3 billion in 2023/24 and £58.8 billion in 2024/25. By 2024/25, funding per pupil will have risen to its highest ever level, in real terms. This additional funding will enable head teachers to continue to concentrate funding in areas the Department knows has a positive effect on educational attainment, including high quality teaching and targeted support to the children who need it most.

From October 2022 to 31 March 2023, schools will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, protecting them from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

Reforms to support schools and drive improved attainment were set out in the Schools White Paper. This includes the National Tutoring Programme, which is helping those pupils that need it with additional targeted support, including those who have been hardest hit by disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help teachers, the Oak National Academy has been established as a public body, which will provide free, optional, adaptable digital curriculum resources including in English and maths.

The Department has also established Education Investment Areas (EIAs), prioritising support to the areas of the country with the most entrenched underperformance. In all 55 EIAs, the Department will be taking steps to support underperforming schools to make necessary improvements, build trust capacity and improve digital connectivity.

Over the next three years, up to £86 million in trust capacity funding and £150 million for extending the Connect the Classroom programme are being prioritised in EIAs.

In addition, the Department is investing in 24 Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA), helping drive the attainment of all children across the area. In each of the 24 PEIAs, the Department will offer further investment in addition to the significant support available to all EIAs. PEIAs will receive a share of around £40 million of funding to address local needs, and priority access to a number of other programmes offered by the Department.

## ■ Schools: Water

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[114679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help raise awareness in schools of safety in and around bodies of water.

**Nick Gibb:**

Water safety is a vital life skill, which is why swimming and water safety is a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for Physical Education for primary schools.

Schools are supported to teach water safety through lessons on Oak National Academy and new resources for pupils in Key Stages 1 to 3 have been launched by the National Water Safety Forum. These resources teach children how to be safe in and around different water environments and include cold water shock and icy conditions.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Dan Carden:**

**[112155]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Ofsted Annual Report 2021/22: education, children's services and skills published 13 December 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of that report's findings on special needs provision; and whether she plans to take steps to improve special needs provision.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is aware of the Ofsted Annual Report which highlights areas of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system including recruitment and staff turnover, local area SEND inspections, and the increase in the number of pupils identified as having SEND.

The SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper set out the department's proposals for how we will improve the SEND system, so that it delivers improved outcomes, improved experiences, and financial sustainability.

The department is committed to publishing a full response to the green paper in an improvement plan in early 2023.

We will continue to support the system in the immediate term to deliver change and continue to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and those who need AP.

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[113407]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has taken recent steps to increase the number of special school places.

**Claire Coutinho:**

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

As part of this commitment, in March 2022 the department announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations amounting to over £1.4 billion of new investment, focused on academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25. It is ultimately up to local authorities to determine how to best prioritise their funding to address their local priorities.

The £2.6 billion capital investment in high needs provision announced in October 2021 will also help to deliver up to 60 new special and alternative provision free schools. This is in addition to the 48 special free schools already in the pipeline and 90 special free schools already opened.

**Nadia Whittome:**

**[113409]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to increase the number of supported internship places for young people with SEND (a) with and (b) without an EHCP.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Supported internships are personalised study programmes, specifically designed to support young people aged 16-24 with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, to prepare for and transition into sustained, paid employment.

In February 2022, the department announced that we are investing up to £18 million over the next three years to build capacity in the Supported Internships programme, aiming to double the number of Supported Internships to give more young people with an EHC plan the skills to secure and sustain paid employment.

As part of this investment, the department has a contract with the Internships Work consortium, led by the National Development Team for Inclusion, to deliver activities to expand and improve Supported Internships provision across the country.



For those without an EHC plan, traineeships are a pathway to apprenticeships and other employment for 16 to 24 year olds with minimal work experience and without the skills, experience, and confidence to start an apprenticeship or job.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[114611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve support for children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

**Claire Coutinho:**

On 29 March 2022, the department published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper, which sets out plans to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP, within a fairer and more financially sustainable system.

The Green Paper consultation closed on 22 July 2022. The department is currently reviewing the feedback received and using this, along with continued engagement with the system, to inform the next stage of delivering improvements for children, young people and their families.

The department is committed to publishing a full response to the Green Paper in an Improvement Plan in early 2023.

The department will continue to support the system in the immediate term to deliver change and continue to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and those who need AP.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Training

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[113438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing mandatory SEND training for all (a) teachers and (b) education staff.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is committed to ensuring that all pupils can reach their potential and receive excellent support from their teachers. The Teachers' Standards set clear expectations that teachers must understand the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Consideration of SEND underpins both the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework (ECF) which were both produced with the support of sector experts.

ITT courses must be designed so that teacher trainees can demonstrate that they meet all of the Teachers' Standards at the appropriate level, including the requirement in Standard 5 that all teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils. All trainees who achieve Qualified Teacher Status must demonstrate that they can adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.



The ECF has been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed and seeks to widen access for all. This includes those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the SEND code of practice, and children in need of help and protection as identified in the Children in Need Review. Head teachers use their professional judgement to identify any further training, including specific specialisms, for individual staff that is relevant to them, the school, and its pupils.

The Universal Services programme, which commenced this year with a budget of nearly £12 million, provides SEND specific training and support to the school workforce and the further education workforce, so they can identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND earlier and more effectively. It will also help to successfully prepare children and young people for adulthood, including employment. It is available for all teachers, leaders, and other staff at all stages of their careers, at the point of need, with a particular focus on mainstream settings.

All maintained mainstream schools and mainstream academy schools (including free schools) must have a qualified teacher, or the head teacher, designated as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). SENCOs appointed after 1 September 2009, are required to achieve a National Award for SEN Coordination (NASENCO) within three years of appointment.

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Unemployment**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[114667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate has she made of the number of young adults who had education, health and care plans at school who are not in education, employment or training at ages (a) 18, (b) 21 and (c) 25.

**Robert Halfon:**

The information requested is not held. Data is collected by the department on the number of young people who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan who are currently not in education, employment, or training. In January 2022, there were 12,497 young people meeting this criteria. The data cannot be broken down further by age.

#### ■ **Students: Cost of Living**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[114556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps she has taken to help support students with increases in the cost of living.

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[114557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effects of increases in the cost of living on improving access to higher education for students from (a) diverse and (b) disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted students. Many higher education (HE) providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance. There is £261 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. The department is also working with the Office for Students to ensure universities support students in hardship using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this act are set out in the legislation.

A HM Treasury-led review is being undertaken to consider how to support households and businesses with energy bills after April 2023.

Decisions on student support are taken on an annual basis. The government has continued to increase living costs support each year with a 2.3% increase to maximum loans and grants for living and other costs for this academic year, 2022/23.

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

The government is currently considering options for changes to loans and grants for living and other costs for the 2023/24 academic year starting in August 2023 and an announcement will follow in due course.

The UCAS end of cycle report shows that in 2022 we had record numbers of 18-year-olds getting into university, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. An English 18-year-old from a disadvantaged background today is 86% more likely to go to university than in 2010.

The department's widening participation publication from 2022 shows that progression to HE has increased across all students, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Black pupils have seen the greatest increase in the proportion entering HE by age 19, increasing from 44.1% in 2009/10 to 62.1% in 2020/21.

**Teachers: Training****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[113453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if department will reintroduce the PGCE student bursary for current PGCE students.

**Nick Gibb:**

The bursaries the Department offers for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) are intended to incentivise applications to ITT courses. The Department reviews the bursaries each year to take account of factors including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers.

For those starting ITT in the 2023/24 academic year, the Department is offering a £27,000 tax-free bursary in chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics. Prestigious scholarships worth £29,000 tax-free will be offered in chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics. A languages scholarship worth £27,000 tax-free will be available in French, German and Spanish. The Department is also offering a £25,000 tax-free bursary for geography and languages, including ancient languages, a £20,000 tax-free bursary for biology and design & technology and a £15,000 tax-free bursary for English.

Schools offering the Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship or School Direct (salaried) routes will continue to be able to access funding equivalent to the bursary amount.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Agriculture: Pest Control****Caroline Lucas:**[\[114595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to support farmers to move away from using pesticides and towards integrated pest management.

**Mark Spencer:**

Integrated Pest Management lies at the heart of our approach to minimise the environmental impact of pesticides and is a key tool for businesses facing the challenges of pesticide resistance, removal of pesticides from the market, and changing pest pressures due to climate change. All professional users of pesticides are encouraged to follow the principles of IPM. This is supported through formal training requirements, guidance, conditions of pesticide use and industry assurance schemes.

We are working to increase the availability of tools to support the use of IPM. We recently commissioned a package of research projects that will bring together scientific evidence underpinning IPM and to look at ways of further encouraging its uptake. This work will support farmers' access to the most effective IPM tools available and ensure that we understand changing trends in pest threats across the UK.

## ■ Animal Products: Labelling

**Henry Smith:**

[\[113274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to publish proposals for the introduction of mandatory animal welfare labelling for food.

**Mark Spencer:**

At the end of 2021, the Government ran a call for evidence to gather data on the impacts, cost and deliverability of different types of labelling reforms for animal welfare.

Building on this call for evidence, the Government announced in the recent Food Strategy that we will consult on mandatory animal welfare labelling reforms in 2023. Consultation proposals are being co-developed with stakeholders across the supply chain.

## ■ Animal Welfare: Public Consultation

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[110866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to bring forward a public consultation on the use of cages in farmed animals; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing forward a public consultation on reforming food labelling to reflect animal welfare.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is committed to exploring the phasing out of cages, supporting the industry to do so in a way which underpins UK food production and does not have unintended animal welfare or business impacts. We will progress with plans to consult on the use of cages in farming systems as soon as the time is right.

## ■ Food Poverty

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[107171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to encourage businesses in the food sector to play a greater role helping to alleviate food poverty.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[107172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking with supermarkets to help address food poverty.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra officials have regular discussions with food retailers, and other sectors within the food industry, on the impact of food price inflation and availability of affordable food.

Through regular engagement, Defra will continue to work with food retailers and producers to explore the range of measures they can take to ensure the availability of

affordable food. For example, by maintaining value ranges, price matching and price freezing measures.

## ■ Food Security

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[107161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made a recent estimate of the probability of ailing to achieve food security.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[107162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the impact of food insecurity on the cost of food.

**Mark Spencer:**

The United Kingdom has a highly resilient food supply chain. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources, strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. Defra has a collaborative relationship with industry which allows us to effectively respond to disruption, should it occur.

Recognising the importance of food security, in the Agriculture Act 2020, the Government made a commitment to produce an assessment of our food security at least once every three years. The first UK Food Security Report was published in December 2021. This report will serve as an evidence base for future policy work.

The report recognises the contribution made by British farmers to our resilience, and the importance of strong domestic production to our food security. It considers the UK's food supply sources overall, noting that domestic production and diversity of supply are both important to our food security.

We continue to monitor food prices using the ONS inflation figures.

International commodity prices are heavily influenced by factors such as energy costs and exchange rates. Given sustained pressures, we anticipate food prices continuing to trend upwards until early 2023 and then begin to fall gradually.

Defra is taking action to maintain an efficient food supply chain by mitigating against any potential burdens or friction which could otherwise drive-up consumer food prices.

Through regular engagement, Defra will continue to work with food retailers and producers to explore the range of measures they can take to ensure the availability of affordable food. For example, by maintaining value ranges, price matching and price freezing measures.

Food prices are set individually by businesses. It is not for HM Government to set retail food prices nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by companies. Rising food prices are dependent on a combination of factors including agri-food import prices, domestic agricultural prices, exchange rates, domestic labour and manufacturing costs.

The Government is committed to a sustainable, long-term approach to tackling poverty and supporting people on lower incomes.

We understand that people are worried about the cost-of-living challenges ahead which is why the Government has announced decisive action to support households.

To protect the most vulnerable, the Chancellor recently announced a package of targeted support worth £26 billion, which includes continued support for rising energy bills.

More than eight million households on means-tested benefits will receive a cost-of-living payment of £900 in instalments, with £300 to pensioners and £150 for people on disability benefits.

This is in addition to the existing £1.5 billion to help households with the cost of essentials, including food.

## ■ Infant Foods

**Alison Thewliss:**

**[110739]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) price and (b) availability of first stage infant formula.

**Mark Spencer:**

We continue to monitor food prices using the ONS inflation figures. Recent pressures have been sustained and we have seen food price inflation continue to rise to 16.5% in November, up from 16.4% in October.

Defra is taking action to maintain an efficient food supply chain by mitigating against any potential burdens or friction which could otherwise drive-up consumer food prices.

Through regular engagement, Defra will continue to work with food retailers and producers to explore the range of measures they can take to ensure the availability of affordable food. For example, by maintaining value ranges, price matching and price freezing measures.

It is not for HM Government to set retail food prices nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by companies. Rising food prices are dependent on a combination of factors including agri-food import prices, domestic agricultural prices, domestic labour and manufacturing costs.

In the UK we are fortunate to have a large and resilient food supply chain. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production and imports through stable trade routes.

The Government have committed £37 billion to support households with the cost of living. This includes an additional £500 million to help with the cost of household essentials, bringing total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England this is in

the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund, running from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

We have also increased our Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping low-income families to buy basic foods such as milk, fruit and vitamins ensuring that families are not choosing between costs and healthy choices. The Department for Health and Social care has responsibility for these vouchers, and for wider infant health policy.

## ■ Livestock: Antibiotics

**Ian Byrne:**

**[110862]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to encourage farmers to reduce the use of antibiotics on livestock; and if she will bring forward legislative proposals to tackle routine overuse of antibiotics on groups of healthy animals.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra is a co-signatory with the Department of Health and Social Care of the UK's Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 5 year National Action Plan (2019-2024) and the UK's 20 year Vision to Contain and Control AMR by 2040, documents which set out the UK's shorter and longer term goals for mitigating the threat of AMR.

The UK Government is committed to reducing unnecessary use of antibiotics in animals while safeguarding animal welfare. It has been our position for many years that we do not support the routine or predictable use of antibiotics, including where antibiotics are used to compensate for inadequate farming practices. We seek to reduce veterinary antibiotic prescribing through a combination of approaches, including improved biosecurity, stockmanship and good farming practices, disease prevention (including vaccination) and use of diagnostics. To date in the UK, collaborative working between government, the veterinary profession and the agriculture sectors to focus on these issues has resulted in our national sales of veterinary antibiotics reducing by 55% since 2014, and in 2021 we recorded the lowest antibiotic use to date.

Changes to the law on veterinary medicines is one of the tools which can be used to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescribing in animals and, as one element of a programme of interventions to help deliver the UK's 5-year national action plan on antimicrobial resistance, it is our intention to strengthen our national law in this area.

Over the past year the Veterinary Medicines Directorate has engaged in a comprehensive dialogue with stakeholders about a broad range of changes that we propose to the Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013, which set out controls on marketing, manufacturing, supply and use of veterinary medicines. Proposed changes include new measures to help tackle antimicrobial resistance.

We are now preparing to publish a formal consultation paper setting out our proposals which will provide the opportunity for all affected stakeholders to express



their views. Following the public consultation, we anticipate laying new legislation in 2023.

## ■ Marine Protected Areas

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[114834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many UK Marine Protected Areas her Department expects will meet their conservation goals.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a devolved competency and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Our aim is that all our MPAs will meet their conservation goals. On 16<sup>th</sup> December, we announced a set of legally binding targets for the environment. This includes one for MPAs, which is for 70% of protected features in MPAs to be in favourable condition by 2042, with the remainder in a recovering condition. To help achieve this, the Marine Management Organisation has an ambitious programme to introduce bylaws to restrict the most damaging fishing activity, like bottom trawling.

We know that if we stop damaging activities and manage our sites properly then protected features will begin to recover.

## ■ Pesticides

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[114594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when her Department plans to publish the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides.

**Mark Spencer:**

Work continues on an updated UK National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (NAP). We expect to publish the updated NAP in the first half of 2023.

We are immensely grateful to stakeholders for their engagement during the formal consultation and additional points of engagement; this has helped to inform our policy development. We look forward to continuing to work together on the important challenge of delivery.

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[114596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to follow the advice of the Expert Committee on Pesticides and not grant an emergency derogation for the use of Cruiser SB.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has received an application from National Farmers Union (NFU) Sugar and British Sugar seeking emergency authorisation for the use of a neonicotinoid product as a seed treatment on the 2023 sugar beet crop: Cruiser SB.



Following the normal process for emergency authorisations, the application is considered by the HSE, which seeks advice from the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) on specific scientific questions. Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) also provides advice.

In reaching a decision, Defra Ministers will consider the advice from the HSE, the ECP, the CSA and Defra officials and consider whether the parameters for granting an emergency authorisation are met.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ **Armenia: Prisoners of War**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[113348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to the Azeri Government on the release of Armenian Prisoners of War captured in Armenian territory.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government continues to encourage both parties to the conflict to return prisoners of war and the remains of the deceased. We welcomed the most recent return of prisoners of war in November and return of remains of the deceased in December. I spoke to Armenian FM Mirzoyan on 15 September, Azerbaijani FM Bayramov on 17 September and met the Azerbaijani and Armenian Ambassadors on 9 November and 12 December respectively. In all these engagements, I urged both parties to settle all outstanding matters related to the conflict and reinforced that diplomacy remains the only way to secure stability and peace in the region.

### ■ **European Parliament Members: Lobbying**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[113180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports of the arrests of former and existing Members of the European Parliament in relation to alleged lobbying activity; and if he will make a statement.

**Leo Docherty:**

I refer the honourable member to my [Minister Docherty] reply to his question 110608 of 19 December. The Government continues to monitor developments in the European Parliament.

### ■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[113187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of electronic purchasing card spending over

£500 for 2021, what goods or services were purchased under the category Computer Equipment and Services from (a) Manta Air Maldives on 5 October 2021, and (b) The Marina at Crossroads Maldives on 12 December 2021.

**David Rutley:**

These costs do not relate to the purchase of computer equipment. Merchant Category Codes (MCC) can sometimes be wrongly assigned by the merchant's card company. When transactions are approved in our system, we are not provided with the Merchant Category Codes (MCC), only the merchant's name, date, and the value. Correct MCC assignment is the responsibility of the merchant and has no bearing on the validity of the transaction.

The Manta Air expenditure relates to local flights for UK experts deployed to the Maldives to deliver underwater counter-terrorism training at the Maldives Police Academy. Manta Air offered the best value and the expenditure was subject to normal FCDO controls.

The Marina at Crossroads expenditure relates to a UK-hosted diplomatic event with key Maldivian government contacts. The Marina was chosen as our High Commission does not have a residence equipped to host such events. It is recognised across the UK Government that the exchange of hospitality has long been an important part of building relations, particularly overseas.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[113188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of electronic purchasing card spending over £500 for 2021, what items were purchased from American Tactical on (a) 9 March, (b) 22 June, (c) 27 July, (d) 21 October and (e) 23 December 2021 for the combined price of £6,071.99; and for what purpose those items were required by his staff in Colombia.

**David Rutley:**

The card was used to purchase professional equipment for the British Ambassador's close protection team.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[114578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is his Department's policy that government procurement cards should not be used for purchases (a) of alcohol and (b) that could be made via an alternative compliant purchasing route.

**David Rutley:**

It is FCDO policy that Government Procurement Cards (GPC) can be used to purchase supplies of alcohol for official representational purposes both in the UK and at our network of overseas posts. Providing alcoholic refreshment where necessary and locally appropriate supports the achievement of FCDO objectives including by showcasing the UK's food and drink sector. The use of GPC cards for this purpose represents an efficient, value for money purchasing solution. FCDO's procurement policy sets out the circumstances in which use of a Government Procurement card is

appropriate. Every GPC transaction is approved by a supervising officer and controls are in place to prevent use outside policy and to ensure that the use of the card and the goods and services purchased are appropriate and represent value for money for the taxpayer.

## ■ Nagorno Karabakh

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[113242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Azerbaijan on the persecution of the Armenian population in Nagorno Karabakh.

**Leo Docherty:**

I [Minister for Europe] spoke to Azerbaijani FM Bayramov on 17 September and met the Azerbaijani Ambassador on 9 November. In both of these engagements, I highlighted the need for all outstanding matters between Armenia and Azerbaijan to be settled by peaceful negotiation. Following the recent closure of the Lachin Corridor, the UK's Representative at the UNSC reinforced these messages. If the UK Government sees clear evidence of persecution of any ethnic group in the region, we will raise our concerns directly with the state in question, and in appropriate multilateral fora.

## ■ Nagorno Karabakh: Peacekeeping Operations

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[113241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of international peacekeeping forces in Nagorno Karabakh.

**Leo Docherty:**

At this time, the UK Government has not made an assessment on the adequacy or effectiveness of the Russian 'peacekeeping' forces, although we are aware of the terms of their deployment, as set out in the Trilateral Ceasefire Agreement of 2020. Our view is that any deployment of international observers should follow recognised and accepted international norms. We have been clear that there can be no military settlement to this conflict. As such, we welcome the continued efforts of international partners, including the recent deployment of EU and OSCE Monitoring Missions, to support stability and security in the region.

## ■ Somalia: Peacekeeping Operations

**Chris Law:**

[\[112095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to provide support to (a) disarmament, (b) demobilization, (c) reintegration and (d) defection programmes in Somalia.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK recognises the importance of stabilisation to security in Somalia and the region. We coordinate with international partners, the UN and the Somali Government to understand the needs of communities and support stabilisation efforts, including through our Early Recovery Initiative. The UK supports Somalia's National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants, which aims to establish a safe pathway for low-risk combatants to disengage from non-state armed groups and sustainably reintegrate into communities. The UK also supports the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF), contributing £38 million since 2016 and leveraging a further £52.7 million from others donors over the same period demonstrating their confidence in the Fund and UK leadership. During my visit to Somalia in November, I [Minister Mitchell] pursued these issues as well as proposals to enhance UK support with the Federal Government of Somalia, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the Somali Defence Minister and National Security Adviser.

**Chris Law:**[\[112096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase the capacity of support for (a) disarmament, (b) demobilization, (c) reintegration and (d) defection programmes in Somalia during the current Somali offensive against al-Shabaab.

**Chris Law:**[\[112097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding his Department has provided to peacebuilding programmes in Somalia in the 2022-23 financial year.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK recognises the importance of stabilisation to security in Somalia and the region. We coordinate with international partners, the UN and the Somali Government to understand the needs of communities and support stabilisation efforts, including through our Early Recovery Initiative. The UK supports Somalia's National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants, which aims to establish a safe pathway for low-risk combatants to disengage from non-state armed groups and sustainably reintegrate into communities. The UK also supports the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF), contributing £38 million since 2016 and leveraging a further £52.7 million from others donors over the same period demonstrating their confidence in the Fund and UK leadership. During my visit to Somalia in November, I [Minister Mitchell] pursued these issues as well as proposals to enhance UK support with the Federal Government of Somalia, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the Somali Defence Minister and National Security Adviser.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Abortion: Children and Young People****Mary Glendon:**[\[113262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to improve the coordination between medical professionals on the provision of medical care before early medical abortions for children and young people aged between 13 and 17.

**Mary Glendon:**[\[113263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to improve the coordination between medical professionals on the provision of medical care after early medical abortions for children and young people aged between 13 and 17.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department continues to work with NHS England, the Care Quality Commission, Royal Colleges and abortion providers to ensure that children and young people have consistent and high-quality care before and after abortion services, including early medical abortion services.

National safeguarding guidance published by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) enables providers to continue to embed safeguarding principles for those aged 18 years old and under accessing early medical abortion services and supports the need for effective co-ordination between clinicians providing medical care.

We will set out expectations around implementation of the RCPCH guidance, including timeframes, in due course.

**Scott Benton:**[\[113440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure children and young people are not suffering from adverse (i) physical and (ii) psychological effects, (b) provide counselling services and (c) provide other adequate care following an early medical abortion undergone by a child or young person.

**Scott Benton:**[\[113441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure children and young people are not suffering from (i) coercion, (ii) sexual abuse and (iii) other adverse treatment, (b) provide counselling services and (c) provide other adequate care prior to an early medical abortion by a child or young person.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Providers are required to have effective arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people accessing abortion services throughout their pathway, including complying with all legal requirements and ensuring staff are trained to recognise signs of abuse, including sexual violence or evidence of coercion.

The Department commissioned the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to develop safeguarding guidance for those aged under 18 years old accessing early medical abortion services. The guidance, published in August, aims to ensure that children and young people's holistic and safeguarding needs are identified and implemented in early medical abortion settings. This includes managing physical, psychological and wider care needs as appropriate.

The guidance emphasises the importance of abortion providers having strong working relationships and networks with wider health services including primary care, community and acute paediatrics and counselling services for children and young people.

### ■ Alprazolam and Temazepam: Shortages

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[113278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of shortages in prescription drugs (a) Temazepam and (b) Alprazolam on patients who are regularly prescribed those drugs; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicine supply issues and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others within the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise.

We are not aware of any shortages of temazepam. Pharmacies can order stock through their usual wholesaler routes. Alprazolam is not permitted for prescribing in National Health Service primary care. We are aware of limited supplies of alprazolam 250 microgram and 500 microgram tablets for use in hospitals and private healthcare. This issue is expected to fully resolve by mid-January 2023.

### ■ Ambulance Services: Death

**Beth Winter:**

[\[114864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of deaths that have been caused by ambulance service delays, broken down by ambulance service trust, in each year since 2010 for which figures are available.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[114865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many serious incidents of avoidable harm due to ambulance service delays there were in each ambulance service trust in each year since 2010.

**Will Quince:**

The information is not collected in the format requested.

## ■ Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates: Regulation

**Jessica Morden:**

**[112077]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2022 to Question 77355 on Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates: Regulation, if it is still his intention to publish the public consultation on the draft legislation aimed at enabling the General Medical Council to regulate physician associates and anaesthesia associates by the end of 2022.

**Will Quince:**

The Government remains committed to the work which will enable the General Medical Council to regulate Anaesthesia Associates and physician associates. We plan to publish the public consultation on the draft legislation early in 2023.

## ■ Antibiotics: Children

**Tom Hunt:**

**[114781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure an adequate supply of antibiotics for children.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is working urgently with manufacturers and wholesalers to explore what can be done to expedite deliveries and bring forward stock they have to help ensure it gets to where it is needed, to meet demand as quickly as possible and support access to these vital medicines, including antibiotics for children.

Serious Shortage Protocols have been issued across the United Kingdom for penicillin medicines, which will help mitigate local supply issues by allowing pharmacists to supply alternative forms of the medicine, or alternative antibiotics, if they do not have the product stated on the prescription.

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicine supply issues and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others within the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise.

## ■ Bereavement Counselling and Infant Mortality

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[113446]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to (a) reduce the rate of infant mortality and (b) increase the number of full-time members of staff specialising in bereavement care; and if he will make an assessment of the reasons for trends in the level of infant mortality in the last five years.



**Maria Caulfield:**

To reduce the rate of stillbirth and neonatal mortality we have introduced targeted interventions such as the implementation of the Saving Babies Lives Care Bundle and the National Maternity and Neonatal Safety Improvement Programme.

Saving Babies' Lives Version Two combines five elements of care, reducing smoking in pregnancy, risk assessment, prevention and surveillance of pregnancies at risk of fetal growth restriction, raising awareness of reduced fetal movement, effective fetal monitoring during labour and reducing preterm birth. The National Maternity and Neonatal Safety Improvement programme aims to improve the safety and outcomes of maternal and neonatal care by reducing unwarranted variation and provide a high-quality healthcare experience for all women, babies and families across maternity and neonatal care settings in England.

Between 2016 and 2020, the infant mortality rate decreased by 5.3%, from 3.8 to 3.6%, per 1,000 live births. In 2020, the rate for male was higher at 4.0% than for female 3.2%.

**■ Carbamazepine and Clobazam: Shortages****Justin Madders:**[\[113296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on tackling potential shortages of (a) Tegretol and (b) Clobazam.

**Will Quince:**

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicine supply issues and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others within the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise.

We are not aware of any shortages of tegretol. There is one company reporting limited supplies of clobazam 10 milligram tablets. However, an alternative supplier is available and providing the liquid formulations of varying strengths. Supplying issues are expected to fully resolve at the end of January 2023.

**■ Community Care: Autism and Learning Disability****Barbara Keeley:**[\[113218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the Government has spent on developing community services for autistic people and people with learning disabilities since (a) the publication of the Building the Right Support National Plan in 2015 and (b) the Care Quality Commission's report on Winterbourne View in 2011.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The information requested is not held centrally in the format requested.



The following table shows NHS England's national investment since 2019/20 to support the NHS Long Term Plan commitments for people with a learning disability and autistic people. These include the development of community health services which will help people to live in the community, help prevent people going into mental health hospitals and support timely discharge.

	2019/20 BUDGET	2020/21 BUDGET	2021/22 BUDGET	2022/23 BUDGET
Community services	£17 million	£20 million	£62 million	£51 million
Children and young people keyworkers	£0 million	£3 million	£14 million	£29 million

Source: NHS England

Note: Community Services includes:

- Community development Care (Education);
- Treatment Reviews Learning from Lives and Deaths – people with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR); and
- Diagnostic pathway for autistic children and young people.

The following table shows the national Funding Transfer Agreement (FTA) funding which supports the discharge of long stay patients into the community.

	2019/20 BUDGET	2020/21 BUDGET	2021/22 BUDGET	2022/23 BUDGET
FTA funding	£80 million	£83 million	£84 million	£84 million

Source: NHS England

The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has set up a task and finish group to look at how to improve national oversight of NHS and local authority spend related to Building the Right Support.

## ■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

**Bambos Charalambous:** [\[113401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide any unused covid-19 vaccinations intended for the 50-65 age group to people aged 40-49.

**Bambos Charalambous:** [\[113402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide further vaccinations against covid-19 for people aged under 50; and whether he plans to allow people in less vulnerable groups to pay for further covid-19 vaccinations.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government continues to be guided by the JCVI on COVID-19 vaccine deployment in line with its Living with Covid strategy. There are therefore no plans to make COVID-19 vaccination available through the NHS to groups not covered by JCVI advice.

The Government currently has no plans to allow private purchase of COVID-19 vaccines, but private access is under regular review. There are no plans to make COVID-19 vaccines available for public purchase and will require Government to work with manufacturers and private healthcare providers to develop a suitable and affordable route for the public.

**■ Dental Services: Staff****Jane Hunt:****[113405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the data available on the trends in the levels of practitioners in the dental workforce.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department and its arms length bodies utilise data collected by NHS Digital on the dental workforce, including on levels of practitioners in the dental workforce, which are available via the following links:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics>

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/dental-working-hours>

This data is adequate for the role of informing policy in relation to National Health Service dentistry.

**■ Dentistry: Qualifications****Kirsten Oswald:****[113284]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications of proposed changes to the General Dental Council (Overseas Registration Examination Regulations) on dental staffing numbers.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department has worked with the General Dental Council (GDC) to develop and consult on legislative proposals to allow the regulator greater flexibility to amend its existing international registration processes and explore alternative registration pathways as appropriate. The resulting draft Order was debated in the House of Commons on 6 December 2022. It is scheduled for debate in the House of Lords on 9 January 2023. Subject to the completion of the Parliamentary approvals process, we aim to introduce the legislative changes in February 2023.

The Department has not made any assessment of the implications of the proposed changes on dental staffing numbers. It will be for the GDC, as an independent

regulator, to decide how best to use the flexibility that these proposals allow. Following the legislative changes, we understand the GDC will consult on changes to how its Overseas Registration Exam operates, which would enable it to increase the number of dentists it can assess, potentially allowing overseas dentists to join its register more quickly.

## ■ Dentistry: Training

**Jane Hunt:**

[\[113404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to train new dentists; and if he will make a statement.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Approximately 800 dentists are trained each year. However, the cap on dental school places was temporarily lifted for students who completed A-Levels in 2020 and in 2021 and who had an offer from a university in England to study dentistry, subject to their grades. As a result, 895 dental students entered training in 2020 and 980 dental students entered training in 2021.

The Government has committed to publishing a workforce plan next year, which will include independently verified forecasts for the number of healthcare professionals required in future years, taking account of improvements in retention and productivity. This will include dental care professionals.

## ■ Disease Control

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[113434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has in place to prepare for a potential future pandemic.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department continues to plan and prepare for a range of pandemic and emerging infectious disease scenarios, including those caused by respiratory, contact and vector-borne pathogens. We are building on lessons learned from exercises and incidents, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandemic preparedness is an area kept under constant review and our strategic approach evolves in response to new scientific information, lessons learned from prior pandemics, responses to other infectious disease outbreaks and rigorous exercising to test our response mechanisms. We have a range of plans and well tested response capabilities in place to respond to pandemics.

## ■ Emergency Calls and NHS 111: Staff

**Wes Streeting:**

[\[72333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many call handlers there are for NHS (a) 111 and (b) 999 services in England.

**Wes Streeting:** [\[72339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS 111 and 999 call handlers there were in October in each year since 2010.

**Will Quince:**

While NHS England collects information on the number of call handlers working in NHS 111 and 999 services, this information has not been centrally validated.

The Department's policy paper 'Our Plan for Patients' outlined the aim of increasing the number of call handlers to 4,800 in NHS 111 and 2,500 in 999 by December 2022. This will help with the answering of 111 calls and dispatch of ambulances for those in greatest need following a call to 999.

**Endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome****Jim Shannon:** [\[113222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the average waiting time for a consultancy appointment for women suffering with (a) polycystic ovary syndrome and (b) endometriosis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific estimate has been made.

**Food: Advertising****Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[113282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation on healthier food advertising before October 2025.

**Alex Sobel:** [\[113386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of postponing the implementation of the advertising restrictions on unhealthy food on TV and online to October 2025 on (a) childhood obesity and (b) meeting the 2030 target to halve childhood obesity.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No specific assessment has been made.

**General Practitioners: Attendance****Tom Hunt:** [\[114805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of missed GP appointments in (a) Ipswich constituency and (b) England.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Local National Health Service organisations and general practitioner practices make their own arrangements for preventing and dealing with missed appointments.

Innovative solutions to reduce rates of missed appointments are on the rise by using text message or email reminders, online cancellation forms, or offering remote appointments for those who do not need a physical examination.

### ■ **Health Services: Prisons**

**Ian Byrne:**

[\[113479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of physical and mental health neglect of minority ethnic people in prison.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No specific assessment has been made.

### ■ **Health: Research**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[113181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of the signing of the UK-South Africa health partnership; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The agreement signed on an enhanced health partnership with South Africa contributes to the Department's strategic priorities to protect the public's health and improve healthcare outcomes.

Implications of the partnership will help to identify solutions to national health challenges through collaborative research projects between United Kingdom and South African scientists and support preparedness for future epidemics by building capability for disease surveillance. The agreement also commits to increase the exchange of knowledge and expertise in areas of shared interest, which will enable the partnership to continue aligning with the Department's priorities.

### ■ **Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme**

**Luke Hall:**

[\[114698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the high travel costs for parents of babies in neonatal care for extended periods; and whether the existing NHS Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme provides adequate support to such parents.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We have made no specific assessment. Visitors to patients in hospitals cannot claim their travel costs through the NHS Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme and there are no plans to review the scheme's qualifying criteria.

**■ Life Sciences and Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access****Mr Laurence Robertson:** [\[113178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential relationship between the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access and the delivery of the ambitions set out in the Life Sciences Vision; and if he will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

No specific assessment has been made. However, the Government remains committed to working with the pharmaceutical industry to deliver on the commitments made in the Life Sciences Vision and to ensure that the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access is seen as part of a holistic environment for Life Sciences.

**■ Maternity Services: Safety****Luke Hall:** [\[114702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on appointing a National Neonatal Safety Champion.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We have no current plans to appoint a National Neonatal Safety Champion.

**Luke Hall:** [\[114703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential role of localised Neonatal Safety Champions in improving outcomes.

**Maria Caulfield:**

There has been a requirement for localised Neonatal Safety Champions to be appointed alongside their maternity counterparts since 2019. They are responsible for supporting the provision of multidisciplinary perinatal services, the implementation of the Neonatal Critical Care Review, representing safety needs of their services at board level, and ensuring the safe delivery of care provision.

**■ Medicine: Education****Charlotte Nichols:** [\[114836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of (a) pathology, (b) radiology and (c) histology students.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Health Education England is continuing to take forward priorities identified in the Cancer workforce plan – phase 1 progress update, and is investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to further expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce. This includes expanding the postgraduate medical training of key cancer related medical professions, including pathologists, histopathologists, radiologists.

More generally, the Government has funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places each year for domestic students in England, a 25% increase over three years. We have seen the first graduates from this expansion enter foundation training from August 2022. The expansion will increase the pool of students who may wish to go on to further post-graduate study.

#### ■ **Mental Health Services: Schools**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[114689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Mental Health Bill will include provisions for every child to (a) have access to a (i) counsellor and (ii) play and creative arts therapist registered by a (A) Government and (B) Government-approved agency within school and (b) for all schools to have a mental health support team.

**Maria Caulfield:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 December 2022 to Question [108084](#).

#### ■ **National Guardian's Office**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[113336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual budget was of the National Guardian's Office in each year since 2015; and how many full time equivalent staff were employed by that office in each year since 2015.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The first year of operation for the National Guardian's Office (NGO) was 2016. The following table shows the annual budgets and staff numbers for the NGO from 2016/17 to 2020/21, the most recent data available.

YEAR	ANNUAL BUDGET	STAFF NUMBERS
2016/17	£993,044	8
2017/18	£992,409	10
2018/19	£1,670,000	11
2019/20	£1,666,657	18
2020/21	£1,666,666	20

#### ■ **NHS and Social Services: Finance**

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[112116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact of the (a) changes to national insurance and (b) rise in inflation on real terms funding for (i) the NHS and (ii) social care services in the next financial year.

**Karin Smyth:**

[\[112117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the impact of (a) changes in national insurance and (b) the increase in inflation on plans for elective recovery.

**Will Quince:**

The funding associated with the former Health and Social Care Levy continues to be available to the National Health Service and social care. This includes the plans to spend £8 billion over three years to help tackle elective backlogs in the NHS. However, Departmental budgets have been adjusted for the fact they are no longer paying the additional employer costs associated with the Levy.

We recognise that inflation will have an impact into future years and the Government is investing an additional £3.3 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the NHS in England, enabling rapid action to improve emergency, elective and primary care performance. This means that the NHS's budget in England will continue to grow in real terms by 1.9% in 2023/24. The NHS will set out full recovery plans for the urgent and emergency care and primary care systems and continue to deliver on the Elective Recovery Plan. In addition, the Chancellor announced up to £2.8 billion in 2023/24 in England and £4.7 billion in 2024/25 to support the adult social care sector. This includes £1 billion to directly support discharges from hospital into the community, to support the NHS.

We expect Local Authorities go beyond meeting inflationary pressures and use this historic funding boost to deliver tangible improvements in adult social care services. These improvements should address discharge delays, social care waiting times, low fee rates, and workforce pressures.

## ■ NHS Trusts: Equality

**Andrew Lewer:**

[\[113288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent employees are in equality, diversity and inclusion roles in NHS Trusts in England.

**Will Quince:**

This information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ NHS: Agency Workers

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[114744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much he is spending each day, on average, on agency staff in the NHS.

**Will Quince:**

This information is not collected in the format requested.



## ■ NHS: Cybersecurity

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[114773]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the cyberattack on the NHS in September 2022.

**Will Quince:**

Following the cyber-attack in August 2022 on the third-party software supplier to health and care, Advanced, the majority of services in the National Health Service have been reconnected and we are working with Advanced to support NHS organisations that are going through the process of reconnection.

As with previous incidents, work is now being undertaken to review the response and identify lessons to support and improve the response to future incidents.

The Cyber Security Strategy for Health and Care, which will be published this year, will detail increasing focus on supply chain. This will include measures to support our critical suppliers to build resilience against attacks like the one on Advanced this Summer. By increasing regulatory control and standards, embedding stronger assurance processes and developing the tools to help health and social care organisations to triage supplier risks, it should enable us to respond more quickly and effectively to manage impact.

## ■ NHS: Industrial Disputes

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[114743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the additional cost to the NHS of each day of industrial action.

**Will Quince:**

No specific estimate has been made of the cost of industrial action to the National Health Service.

## ■ NHS: Pay

**Beth Winter:**

**[113475]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the dates were of each of (a) his and (b) his predecessor's meetings with (i) Royal College of Nursing, (ii) UNISON, (iii) GMB and (iv) Unite to discuss pay in the NHS since the publication of the 35th report of the NHS Pay Review Body.

**Will Quince:**

Ministerial meetings are published on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministerial-gifts-hospitality-overseas-travel-and-meetings#2022>

A full list of ministerial meetings from October to December 2022 will be published at the same link in due course.

**■ Nutrition: Children****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[114544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of children who regularly eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day in Huddersfield constituency.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No specific estimate has been made as the information requested is not collected centrally. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) provides information on dietary intakes and nutritional status for children and adults in the United Kingdom by age group. The latest NDNS data, from 2016 to 2019, shows that 12% of children aged 11-18 years old consume five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

**■ Penicillin****Justin Madders:**[\[113297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on tackling potential (a) shortages and (b) wholesale price increases of Amoxicillin.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is working urgently with manufacturers and wholesalers to explore what can be done to expedite deliveries and bring forward stock they have to help ensure it gets to where it is needed, to meet demand as quickly as possible and support access to these vital medicines. Deliveries into wholesalers and pharmacies are being made with more expected in the coming days and weeks. We are working with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee at pace to review the concessionary price arrangement to see how it can be improved.

We rely on competition to drive down the wholesale prices of generic medicines resulting in lower prices for the National Health Service. England has one of the most competitive generic medicines markets in the Europe. Anti-competitive behaviour, including excessive pricing, is a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The Department asks the CMA to investigate where it has concerns about abuses of competition law for generic medicines and where companies are found by the CMA to be in breach of the legislation, the Department will seek damages and invest that money back into the NHS. The CMA has publicly acknowledged the concerns about the price of antibiotics used to treat Strep A and has been clear about companies' obligations under the law. The CMA is currently working to establish the facts of what is currently happening in the market.

**■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Accident and Emergency Departments****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[113247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether, in the context of the recent increase in cases of Strep A, he expects that the Hospitals Transformation

Programme will offer facilities at both Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Telford Hospital to assess acutely unwell children.

**Will Quince:**

As outlined in 'Transforming the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and Princess Royal Hospital: Strategic Outline Case', both hospital sites will provide the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of acutely unwell children, supported by triage and referral processes offered by NHS 111 and within Primary Care. Most children with illnesses such as Strep A infections will be cared for in the community and in primary care, with facilities available across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin for those who may become critically unwell and require more urgent, specialist treatment.

■ **Streptococcus: Antibiotics**

**Andrew Western:**

[\[113477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure an adequate supply of antibiotics for children, especially amoxicillin and clarithromycin, in the context of Strep A cases.

**Will Quince:**

We are taking decisive action to address temporary supply issues with some antibiotics that can be used to treat Strep A and to improve access to these medicines by continuing to work with manufacturers and wholesalers to expedite deliveries, bring forward stock they have to help ensure it gets to where it is needed and to boost supply to meet demand as quickly as possible.

Eight Serious Shortage Protocols have been issued for penicillin medicines, which will help mitigate local supply issues and allow pharmacists to supply alternative forms of the medicine, or alternative antibiotics, if they don't have the specific product stated on the prescription.

The Department has well-established procedures to deal with medicine supply issues and works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others within the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised when they do arise.

■ **Surgery**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[113224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that a greater number of surgeries for UK patients take place in the UK rather than overseas.

**Will Quince:**

The Department continues to invest in capacity in the National Health Service, to allow patients to receive the high-quality surgery and treatment they need, as quickly as possible. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted

Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity. The target to eliminate waiting times of two years or more for elective procedures was met in July 2022 and we aim to eliminate waiting times of eighteen months or more by April 2023. They also include encouraging innovation, with a new approach to building capacity which includes elective surgical hubs. The 89 surgical hubs already operational across England are separate from urgent and emergency care, meaning more activity, including planned surgery, can continue to take place.

## ■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

[\[113451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help reduce the waiting times and cancellations for surgeries in England.

**Will Quince:**

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years.

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

In England, there are 89 elective surgical hubs focusing on providing high volume, low complexity surgery. These surgical hubs help separate elective care facilities from urgent and emergency care to create additional capacity for elective surgeries.

## ■ Surgical Mesh Implants

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[113226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will take steps to financially support women who have been negatively affected by polypropylene vaginal mesh implants.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Last year, we worked with NHS Resolution to launch a claims gateway on its website to provide further support to patients who may wish to bring a clinical negligence claim in relation to polypropylene vaginal mesh implants. We are also taking a range of action to improve the future safety of medicines and medical devices, setting high standards for industry to market and manufacture products, with the aim of reducing harm in the future.

## ■ Surrogacy

**Andrew Percy:** [113268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals on surrogacy.

**Andrew Percy:** [113269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his Department's policy to support surrogacy law reform; and what steps he will take to (a) consider and (b) give parliamentary time to the recommendations of the Law Commission on surrogacy.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Law Commissions of England and Wales, and Scotland currently intend to publish a full report of their review of surrogacy legislation, with a draft bill, in Spring 2023. The Government will consider the report and legislative proposals upon the publication.

## ■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [113161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of changes to the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access (VPAS) rebate on (a) clinical trials investment in the UK and (b) the prioritisation of the UK as a launch market for innovative treatments.

**Will Quince:**

The impact of higher payment percentages in both the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS), and the Statutory Scheme on research and development investment, on the prioritisation of the United Kingdom as launch market for innovative treatment was considered as part of a consultation process in 2022 to update the statutory scheme to control the costs of branded health service medicines. It is also being considered in a current consultation.

Full details of the current consultation are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-update-to-the-2023-statutory-scheme-to-control-the-costs-of-branded-health-service-medicines>

Full details of the earlier 2022 consultation are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/update-to-the-statutory-scheme-to-control-the-costs-of-branded-health-service-medicines>

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [113162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the extent to which the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access (VPAS) has met its objectives as laid out in the scheme documentation of supporting the life sciences industry across the UK and future innovation; and if will make a statement.

**Will Quince:**

The Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS) has met the objectives laid out in the scheme documentation, as discussed at the mid-scheme review held in September 2021.

The minutes of the review are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2019-voluntary-scheme-for-branded-medicines-pricing-and-access-operational-review-and-mid-scheme-review-minutes-28-september-2021/28-september-2021-minutes>

**Zoonoses: Furs****Dr Lisa Cameron:****[113370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had the (a) World Health Organisation and (b) World Organisation for Animal Health on the risk of zoonotic diseases being spread to humans from fur farms globally, in the context of the H5N1 avian flu outbreak in winter 2022.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Fur farming is banned in England. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has not been involved in any discussions with the World Health Organization or the World Organisation for Animal Health specifically on the general risk of zoonotic disease spread from fur farms globally.

UKHSA continues to work closely with animal health colleagues at the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Animal and Plant Health Agency as well as international partners to assess any specific risks that are identified globally which would have potential implications to the United Kingdom public health.

**HOME OFFICE****Asylum****Derek Twigg:****[112046]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Prime Minister's Answer to the hon. Member for Halton during his oral statement on Illegal Immigration on 13 December 2022, Official Report, column 902, what the evidential basis was for saying that the initial asylum backlog is approximately 117,000.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office records information relating to asylum applications on case working systems. Information derived from these systems – including data on the number of asylum cases awaiting an initial decision – are published in the quarterly [Immigration Statistics](#). The latest data show that there were 117,400 applications awaiting an initial decision at the end of September 2022.

The underlying data can be found in table Asy\_D03 of the ' [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#) '. Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the

'Notes' page of the workbooks. Please note, the data show a snapshot as at the last day of each quarter, rather than the number of asylum applications awaiting a decision over the entire quarter. Additional information can be found in the [User Guide to: Immigration Statistics](#).

## ■ Asylum: Rwanda

**Hilary Benn:**

**[113211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to her oral Statement on 19 December 2022, on Migration and Economic Development, Official Report, whether her Department's policy of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda applies to (a) a family group arriving in the UK to seek asylum and (b) individuals arriving in the UK to seek asylum who have family members already in the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

With the exception of unaccompanied children, any individual who has arrived in the UK since 1 January 2022 by unnecessary and dangerous means from safe countries may be considered for relocation to Rwanda.

Families with children are potentially eligible for relocation; however the initial process will focus on adults. A further assessment of Rwanda's capacity to accommodate children will be undertaken before this occurs. This is set out in our published Equality Impact Assessment: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migration-and-economic-development-partnership-with-rwanda>.

For those with family links in the UK who want to be considered for entry to the UK, they should seek to do so via legal and safe routes.

Everyone considered for relocation will be screened and have access to legal advice. Decisions will be taken on a case-by-case basis, and nobody will be removed if it is unsafe or inappropriate for them.

## ■ Biometric Residence Permits

**Dan Carden:**

**[114866]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many biometric residence permit correction requests were made in each month of the last five years.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The information is not available publicly and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

## ■ Cadbury: Supply Chains

**Jim Shannon:**

**[114631]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will have discussions with Cadbury's on modern slavery and child exploitation risks within supply chains.



**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The UK has consistently supported the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on business and human rights, which are widely regarded as the authoritative international framework to steer practical action by Governments and businesses worldwide on this important agenda. Implementation of the UNGPs supports access to justice and remedy for victims of business-related human rights abuses, wherever these occur, and encourages businesses to voluntarily adopt due diligence approaches to respecting human rights.

The Government is clear that it expects all UK businesses to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UNGPs.

The UK was the first country in the world to require businesses to report on the steps they have taken to tackle modern slavery. Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to report annually on the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The landmark 'Transparency in Supply Chains' provisions in the Modern Slavery Act have driven a change in business culture, spotlighting modern slavery risks on boardroom agendas and within the international human rights community. We recognise, however, there is more to do to keep businesses focused on this important issue.

The prevalence of modern slavery and complexity of global supply chains means that it is highly unlikely that any sector or company is immune from the risks of modern slavery. Section 54 therefore does not require organisations to certify that their supply chains are 'slavery free' or require the Government to verify the content of modern slavery statements. The Government expects companies to report transparently about how they are mitigating modern slavery risks and to use their modern slavery statements to demonstrate year on year progress. This enables consumers, shareholders and civil society to scrutinise the efforts being made.

**■ Forced Labour: Seasonal Workers****Dan Carden:**[\[113357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many investigations under the Seasonal Worker scheme have been (a) launched and (b) concluded by (i) her Department and (ii) the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority since the start of that scheme.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office is unable to comment on ongoing investigations.

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority does not hold the requested information as its investigations are not specific to the Seasonal Workers Scheme.



## ■ Immigration Removal Centres: Standards

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[105450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of conditions in immigration detention centres in the UK.

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[105451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on the compatibility UK detention centres with international human rights law.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The safety and welfare of all those in our care is of the utmost importance and we accept nothing but the highest standards from those companies employed to provide detention and escorting services on our behalf.

Individuals detained in the immigration detention estate must be treated in accordance with the Detention Centre Rules 2001, the operating standards for IRCs and Detention Services Orders. Service providers for IRCs are contractually required to comply with all relevant UK legislation.

Immigration removal centres (IRC) suppliers are required to provide a safe and secure environment for detained individuals in their care and the conditions and facilities at all immigration detention facilities are kept under regular review.

IRCs are subject to statutory oversight by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons and by Independent Monitoring Boards who are both members of the National Preventative Mechanism comprising a group of independent bodies which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detained individuals. This contributes to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) visited the UK from 25 to 28 November 2022 and met the Minister for Immigration and senior officials. Their report is scheduled to be published in 2023.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**John Penrose:**

[\[113256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letters of 26 September, 23 October and 22 November from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare on behalf of his constituent Vera Egbo about a visa.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 20 December 2022.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 30 June 2022 with reference ZA29473.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office will issue a response shortly.

**Dan Carden:** [\[113332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 19 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton.

**Dan Carden:** [\[113333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to correspondence via email dated 21 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on Mohamad Kamel Alzahouri.

**Dan Carden:** [\[113362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 7 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton relating to Ellis Jaarukako Mbucza.

**Dan Carden:** [\[113366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 7 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton, relating to Kaiwan Rasul Baiz.

**Robert Jenrick:**

MPAM/0471662/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

MPAM/0469956/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

MPAM/0470004/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

MPAM/0481709/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 25 May 2022 regarding her constituent, Mr Jemmo, with reference ZA24744.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 16 June 2022 regarding Ms Chukubereduko, with reference ZA28409.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 28 June 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Ali Khuda Baksh with reference ZA29627.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 13 July 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Oladapo with reference ZA29764.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 14 July 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Saroor with reference ZA29652.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 4 August 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Bustan with reference ZA29937.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 4 August 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Atkinson with reference ZA30030.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 11 August 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Alale with reference ZA30036.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 19 August 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Tayeh with reference ZA27703.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 26 August 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Goldacre with reference ZA21988.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 22 September 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Githui with reference ZA27841.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 29 September 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Hider with reference ZA17137.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 14 October 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Kurjata with reference ZA29323.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 6 October 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Vasylieva with reference ZA30572.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 6 October 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Babadi with reference ZA30568.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 6 October 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Ahmad with reference ZA30303.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 6 October 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Gill with reference ZA29270.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[113388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 13 October 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Fekak with reference ZA30285.

**Robert Jenrick:**

ZA29270 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA30303 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA30568 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA30572 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA29323 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA17137 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA27841 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA21988 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA27703 – The Director General responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 21 December 2022.

ZA30036 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA30030 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA29937 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Members correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA29652 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA29627 – The Home Office responded on 21 December 2022.

ZA29764 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 20 December 2022.

ZA28409 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

ZA24744 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence during an engagement call 1 December 2022.

ZA30285 – The Home Office has no record of receiving correspondence from the hon. Member.

**Dan Carden:**

**[113372]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 15 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton relating to Preethy Suresh.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 21 December 2022.

**Alison Thewliss:**

**[113390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 14 October 2022 regarding her constituent Ms Keister with reference ZA28436.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 30 December 2022.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 14 October 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Baig with reference ZA28096.

**Alison Thewliss:** [\[114655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 3 November 2022 regarding her constituent Mr Safi with reference ZA27413.

**Robert Jenrick:**

ZA28096 – the Home Office replied on 21 December.

ZA27413 – the Home Office replied on 21 December.

**Dan Carden:** [\[114814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 16 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton relating to Abeer Mohammed.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 21 December.

**Dan Carden:** [\[114841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer 25 November 2022 to Question 93619 on Members: Correspondence, whether the technical fix has been implemented.

**Robert Jenrick:**

A technical fix has now been implemented and is effective for new cases. A manual workaround has also now been developed to address cases impacted before the fix went in.

## ■ National Security: Task Forces

**Kim Leadbeater:** [\[113465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution by the Minister for Security on 1 November 2022, Official Report column 791, what progress her Department has made on establishing a taskforce on national security and safeguarding democracy; and if the Minister for Security will meet with the hon. Member for Batley and Spen to discuss that matter.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

It has become increasingly apparent that the threats to our democratic institutions and wider society are growing, both in depth and complexity, and at pace. As a result, on 1 November, the Security Minister announced to Parliament that the Prime

Minister had asked him to lead a taskforce to drive forward work to protect UK democratic processes

In the time since, the Security Minister has established the new *Defending Democracy Taskforce*, with the first meeting taking place on 28 November 2022. The Taskforce aims to reduce the risk to the UK's democratic processes, institutions, and society, and ensure that these are secure and resilient to threats of foreign interference. The Taskforce brings together the many structures both inside and outside of Government. We are particularly committed to the Taskforce working across government and with Parliament, the UK Intelligence Community, the devolved administrations, academics, and the private sector.

This Taskforce has a mandate to look at the full range of threats facing our democratic institutions and how we build further resilience to safeguard them against physical, personnel and cyber threats.

The offices for the Security Minister and the hon. Member for Batley and Spen are engaging directly to schedule a meeting in the New Year.

#### ■ **Police: Energy Supply**

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[113272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of Police Officer hours spent in (a) Nottinghamshire and (b) England in the last month accompanying energy company agents or debt collection agents acting on behalf of energy companies, enforcing warrants for the forced installation of pre-payment meters.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not collect data on the number of hours police officers have spent accompanying energy company agents or debt collection agents acting on behalf of energy companies, enforcing warrants or the forced installation of pre-payment meters.

The Government expects suppliers to take proactive steps to identify vulnerable consumers and offer them the necessary support. Suppliers can only install prepayment meters without consent to recover debt as a last resort. Ofgem Standard Licence Conditions require suppliers to ensure that prepayment meters are only installed where it is 'safe and reasonably practicable', including consideration of whether a consumer's vulnerability makes a prepayment meter a poor choice.

#### ■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

**Zarah Sultana:**

[\[112176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of Afghans under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme who have permanent settled accommodation that meets their family's needs; when her Department expects those people under that scheme will be placed in such

accommodation; and whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that such accommodation is available to those being accommodated under that scheme.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The recent update to the published ['Afghan Resettlement: Operational Data'](#), shows that, at 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022:

- 22,833 individuals from Afghanistan have been brought to safety in the UK (since the end of June 2021).
- 7,572 of these have now moved into suitable settled accommodation, another 779 people have been matched to a home and are waiting to move in.

Work is underway to assure information relating to all the individuals resettled under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) on case working systems. Once this work concludes, further statistics on both schemes - including the number of people resettled under each - will be included in the published Immigration Statistics.

The Government continues to work at pace, in collaboration with over 350 local authorities across the UK, to meet the demand for housing. Alongside this, we are reaching out to landlords, developers, and the wider private rented sector to encourage further offers of properties.

■ **Safety: Journalism**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[113299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the significance of the threat posed by agents of the Iranian Government to journalists in the United Kingdom.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

We do not routinely comment on operational or intelligence matters, however the UK will always stand up to threats from foreign nations. As we set out in the Integrated Review in 2021, we are committed to addressing growing threats from Iran, as well as other states.

UK Government is committed to the promotion of media freedom with the safety and security of our citizens being of the upmost priority. The UK condemns Iran's targeting of media organisations and journalists. Iran has established a pattern of this type of behaviour which is deplorable, yet sadly typical of the regime and its lack of respect for basic rights.

We will continue to use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and our interests from any Iran-linked threats.



## ■ Young Offenders: Housing

**Janet Daby:**

[113437]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's involvement in the Children in Custody Golden Hour Information Exchange pilot with the Metropolitan Police.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Department has made no formal assessment of the Children in Custody Golden Hour Information Exchange initiative.

The initiative supports how children are transferred between police custody and local authority accommodation. It operated in three London boroughs for the last two years. The Metropolitan Police are now sharing this practice across the entire London area, with a desire to encourage similar national practice.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Department for International Trade: USA

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[111607]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much her Department spent on (a) flights and (b) hotel accommodation for visits by (i) officials and (ii) Ministers to the United States between January 2020 and December 2022.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Department for International Trade Ministerial travel is published at the following location: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dit-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings> where the full cost can be retrieved.

### ■ Department for International Trade: Visits Abroad

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[111605]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2022 to Question 59222 on Visits Abroad, when her Department plans to release the next instalment of data on DIT ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for International Trade released the latest data on ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings on the transparency pages of gov.uk on Friday 16 December 2022.

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[111606]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish details of the (a) meetings and (b) events she attended on her visit to Washington DC in November 2022.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Details of ministerial meetings will be published in the usual way in Q1 2023.

**■ Trade Agreements: Japan****Gareth Thomas:** [\[112040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the UK-Japan Committee on Rules of Origin and Customs-Related Matters has met since the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into effect.

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[112041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the UK-Japan Working Group on Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture has met since the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into effect.

**Greg Hands:**

UK and Japan officials continue to be in close contact to identify any issues and ensure the smooth implementation of the agreement.

Since the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into effect, 13 out of the total 15 working groups, committees or dialogues provided for have been held. A Joint Customs Cooperation Committee (established by the UK-Japan Agreement on Co-operation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters) is separately scheduled to meet in 2023.

**JUSTICE****■ Bail****Steve Reed:** [\[112088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2022 to Question 96614 on Bail, if he will provide a breakdown of the number of offences committed by individuals on bail in 2021 by offence.

**Edward Argar:**

This information can be viewed in the attached table.

The decision to remand an individual in custody or to grant bail is solely a matter for the independent judiciary acting in accordance with the law. The procedures for considering bail or remand are set out in the Bail Act 1976.

An individual may have been charged for multiple offences (on different dates) and therefore the figure for each offence doesn't necessarily represent a new offender each time.

This data covers England and Wales and includes all 43 police forces and the British Transport Police. The number of offences are those committed on all types of bail. The MOJ extract of the Police National Computer does not differentiate between offences committed by defendants on bail while awaiting trial and those committed by offenders on bail after conviction and awaiting sentence.

**Attachments:**

1. Table\_112088 [[2023-01-09 112088 Table.xlsx](#)]

**Courts: Buildings****Catherine West:****[113303]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the quality of court buildings on the backlog of cases in English and Welsh courts.

**Mike Freer:**

We will have spent over £175 million on court maintenance and repairs in the two years to April 2023, to enhance the resilience of the estate and maintain court capacity.

During the last 12 months less than 1% of available sitting days were lost due to planned and unplanned maintenance. When conducting estates works, every effort is made to minimise operational impacts as far as possible.

The HMCTS estate is kept under regular review and spending is prioritised to ensure that buildings are safe, secure, meet statutory requirements and protect continuity of service.

The pandemic caused significant disruption to the justice system and caused the outstanding caseload to build up. To ensure that courts can work at full capacity to deliver swift justice for victims and reduce the outstanding caseload we extended the tenure of 30 Nightingale courtrooms beyond the end of March 2022 and opened two new permanent super courtrooms in Manchester and Loughborough.

**Catherine West:****[113304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking improve the physical state of court premises.

**Mike Freer:**

HMCTS has 335 operational court and tribunal buildings across England, Wales and Scotland which enable work in criminal, civil and Family Courts and the Tribunals.

We will have spent over £175 million on court maintenance and repairs in the two years to April 2023, to enhance the resilience of the estate and maintain court capacity.

The HMCTS Estates Strategy, published in November, outlines our long-term ambitions to improve the condition and resilience of our estate. We have a planned pipeline of future works and this is kept under regular review. We are also developing new court and tribunal buildings in the City of London, Reading and Blackpool and these will provide modern, flexible and sustainable facilities.

Spending is prioritised to ensure that buildings are safe, secure, meet statutory requirements and protect continuity of service. We will continue to work closely with the judiciary and operational colleagues to identify and address the areas of the highest maintenance priority.

## ■ Hate Crime: LGBT+ People

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[113421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support his Department is providing to LGBTQ+ young people aged 16-25 who have been victims of (a) hate crime, (b) serious violence or (c) malicious communications in the last 12 months.

**Edward Argar:**

The Government funds services for all victims of crime, regardless of the crime type, when it happened, or whether it has been reported to the police. The Ministry of Justice provides funding for victim support services both at a national and local level. Local funding is routed through Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) who commission services in their local area based on an assessment of need. This includes providing tailored services for victims with protected characteristics. Whilst we collect voluntary demographic data on the victims these services support, such as age, ethnicity, and sexuality, we do not hold data to the level of granularity requested.

## ■ Homicide: Prison Sentences

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[114549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information his Department holds on what the average custodial sentence for a person convicted of murder was in each of the last 10 years.

**Edward Argar:**

The Ministry of Justice holds data on the average length of the minimum term (sometimes known as a 'tariff') for life sentences for murder convictions, as is set out below.

YEAR OF SENTENCE	MEAN TARIFF (YEARS)	MEAN TARIFF (MONTHS)
2012	20	244
2013	20	246
2014	20	245
2015	20	248
2016	20	251
2017	20	248
2018	21	253
2019	21	255
2020	21	254
2021	21	252

### **Data sources and quality**

Note that the minimum term is the time between date of sentence and tariff expiry date. The figures do not include whole-life orders. The numbers are subject to revision as more data become available; any changes in the numbers since the last publication of this information is as a result of more sentencing data becoming available.

The figures in these tables have been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

**Source: Public Protection Unit Database.**

### ■ **Homicide: Sentencing**

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[114548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department last undertook a review of the sentencing guidelines for murder.

**Edward Argar:**

Murder convictions must attract a mandatory life sentence. Schedule 21 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (now Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020) introduced statutory guidance to be applied by the independent courts when setting the minimum term of imprisonment, which is followed by release on licence.

The Government regularly reviews Schedule 21, most recently as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 which expanded the list of whole life order (WLO) starting points to include the premeditated murder of a child and enabled judges to impose a WLO on those aged 18-20 in exceptional circumstances.

Furthermore, in 2021 the Government commissioned an independent expert, Clare Wade KC, to undertake a review of domestic homicide sentencing. The review was delivered to the department in June 2022 and the Government is carefully considering its recommendations and next steps.

### ■ **Ministry of Justice: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[114579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether it is his Department's policy that government procurement cards should not be used for purchases (a) of alcohol and (b) that could be made via an alternative compliant purchasing route.

**Mike Freer:**

In response to part (a), the provision of alcohol is covered by the departmental policy on gifts and hospitality. This prohibits the provision of alcohol from departmental funds for MoJ people, for example at conferences or other similar events. When providing hospitality to external parties, discretion can be exercised with Director-

level approval, e.g. a modest amount of wine with a meal. Any purchase of alcohol by government procurement cards must be in line with this policy.

On part (b), the policy does not prohibit purchases that could be made via an alternative compliant purchasing route, but it requires cardholders to consult procurement bulletins first to identify whether there is flexibility to use other suppliers where goods/services are available on central contracts.

## ■ Powers of Entry: Meters

**Beth Winter:** [\[114830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prepayment warrant application fees have been charged to customers by (a) constituency and (b) court circuit per month since July 2021.

**Beth Winter:** [\[114831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of prepayment warrant application fees that have been charged to customers since July 2021, who have been identified as (a) over state pension age, (b) disabled or (c) chronically sick.

**Mike Freer:**

HM Courts & Tribunals Service does not hold this data as the court fee is paid by the energy supplier, not the customer.

## ■ Prison Officers: Employment

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[112140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers attended their shift on 10 December 2022.

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[112141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison attended their shift on 10 December 2022.

**Damian Hinds:**

The proportion of prison officers who attended their shift on 10 December 2022 cannot be obtained without incurring disproportionate costs.

Figures for the proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison who attended their shift on 10 December 2022 are provided in the table below.

	AM	PM	ED	NIGHTS
Expected shifts	112	104	30	13
Attended shifts	69	63	14	7
Payment Plus	12	10	8	6

	AM	PM	ED	NIGHTS
Percentage of expected who attended	61.5%	60.5%	46.5%	53.9%
Percentage including Payment Plus	72%	70%	73%	100%

- The data above is combined for operational Bands 3, 4 & 5 at HMP Wandsworth for 10 December 2022
- Expected shifts: these are the shifts which staff are scheduled to work
- Attended shifts: this is the staff attending for duty where they were expected to, including where staff had planned to swap shifts or who were working for paid overtime
- Payment Plus: this is a paid overtime facility for backfilling vacancies

#### ■ Prison Officers: Sick Leave

**Andrew Selous:**

[\[113198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will list the ten prisons which currently have the highest proportion of prison officers off sick and unable to come to work.

**Damian Hinds:**

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including the working days lost due to sickness absence. The latest publication covers data for the period up to 30 September 2022.

Therefore, the latest data available to provide a 'current' proportion of sick absence is for 30 September 2022.

The ten prisons which had the highest proportion of band 3-5 officers who took time off sick on 30 September 2022 is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Snapshot of top 10 prisons with highest proportion of band 3-5 officers<sup>1</sup> off sick on 30 September 2022<sup>2</sup>(p)

PRISON	HEADCOUNT OF BAND 3-5 OFFICERS OFF SICK	HEADCOUNT OF TOTAL BAND 3-5 OFFICERS EMPLOYED ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2022	PROPORTION OF BAND 3-5 OFFICERS SICK AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL BAND 3-5 OFFICERS IN POST
Werrington	25	137	18.25%
Garth	40	284	14.08%

PRISON	HEADCOUNT OF BAND 3-5 OFFICERS OFF SICK	HEADCOUNT OF TOTAL BAND 3-5 OFFICERS EMPLOYED ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2022	PROPORTION OF BAND 3-5 OFFICERS SICK AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL BAND 3-5 OFFICERS IN POST
Onley	22	174	12.64%
Woodhill	36	307	11.73%
Foston Hall	13	123	10.57%
North Sea Camp	6	59	10.17%
The Mount	20	200	10.00%
Wandsworth	38	382	9.95%
Liverpool	27	288	9.38%
Thorn Cross	8	86	9.30%

1. Includes Band 3-4 / Prison Officer (incl specialists), Band 4 / Supervising Officer and Band 5 / Custodial Managers.

2. Includes staff who either had sick end date on or after 30 September 2022 or did not have a sick end date at all, as at time of data being produced for September 2022 HMPP workforce publication

(p) Figures relating to current financial year are provisional

In the 12 months to 30 September 2022, band 3-5 officers lost an average of 17.3 workings days. This is an increase from 16.6 working days compared to the 12 months to 31 March 2022. Trends from 2017 are shown below.

Table 2: Band 3-5 officer sickness, 12 months to 31 March 2017 to 12 months to 30 September 2022

12 MONTHS TO..	WORKING DAYS LOST	AVERAGE STAFF IN POST	AVERAGE WORKING DAYS LOST <sup>1</sup>
31 March 2017	210,880	18,104	11.6
31 March 2018	196,525	19,581	10.0
31 March 2019	225,142	22,223	10.1
31 March 2020	255,782	22,352	11.4
31 March 2021	301,045	21,854	13.8
31 March 2022	365,520	22,154	16.5



12 MONTHS TO..	WORKING DAYS LOST	AVERAGE STAFF IN POST	AVERAGE WORKING DAYS LOST <sup>1</sup>
30 September 2022	379,439	21,958	17.3

1. Average working days lost per member of staff is calculated as number of working days lost to sickness divided by the average number of full time equivalent staff for a year.

## ■ Prisons: Females

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[113376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) operational capacity and (b) population is at each women's prison.

**Damian Hinds:**

The total population and capacity of the prison estate are published weekly at [Prison population statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The population and capacity of each individual prison, including each women's prison, are published monthly at the same link. The operational capacity and population of each women's prison as of Friday 25 November 2022 – the latest date for which figures are available – are shown in the table below:

PRISON	OPERATIONAL CAPACITY	POPULATION
Askham Grange	128	101
Bronzefield	527	474
Downview	356	253
Drake Hall	340	316
East Sutton Park	98	83
Eastwood Park	377	342
Foston Hall	284	235
Low Newton	278	241
New Hall	381	319
Peterborough (Female)	372	330
Send	189	168
Styal	432	392

**■ Prisons: Kingston upon Hull****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[114618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce drug use in prisons in Hull.

**Damian Hinds:**

Our landmark Drugs Strategy published in December 2021, is an ambitious cross government 10-year plan to address illegal drug use in both prison and the community.

We are investing a further £120m to keep drugs out of prisons and get offenders off drugs and into recovery, including in HMP Hull. This includes expanding the use of Incentivised Substance-Free Living units where prisoners commit to remain drug-free and undergo regular drug tests, rolling out up to 18 new Drug Recovery Wings which will support those recovering from opiate misuse to become abstinent, and recruiting Health and Justice Coordinators across all probation regions to ensure continuity of care for prison leavers.

Our £100m Security Investment Programme, aimed at reducing crime in prisons, was completed in March 2022. This investment included delivery of 75 additional X-ray body scanners, resulting in full coverage across the closed adult male estate. There are now 97 scanners across 95 prisons, including HMP Hull.

**■ Prisons: Mental Health Services****Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[112144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what mental health support is available to prison staff.

**Damian Hinds:**

In full recognition of the challenging aspects of prison-based work, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service is committed to providing a range of formal and peer led mental health support for prison staff. Modes of support offered include self-referral to counselling via a 24 hours and 365 days a year confidential telephone helpline and self-referral for online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Management led referrals are routed to the Occupational Health (OH) provider where assessments and feedback on fitness for work or work adjustments are relayed back to the manager with employee consent. OH assessments are conducted by qualified specialist nurses, doctors and mental health clinicians. For work related trauma management, face to face or virtual Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing therapy (EMDR) is offered if clinically appropriate. OH also offers a Post-Covid 19 syndrome service which provides structured mental health support as well as physical support.

Proactive mental health support, by the means of 'Reflective Sessions' is delivered by a third-party provider and mental health qualified practitioners. Reflective Sessions take the form of individual or group sessions at either HMPPS or supplier premises.

The sessions aim to both reduce the likelihood that staff will experience adverse effects as a result of working on programmes with offenders or high-risk cases, and to increase the likelihood of the experience of positive effects as a result of this work. A wide range of mental health promotion proactive wellbeing workshops are also offered and delivered either via Teams or in person in prisons.

Peer support groups include Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) practitioners, Care Teams and Mental Health Allies. Chaplains are also well-established to provide mental health support to prison staff and prisoners alike.

Employee wellbeing apps are available to be downloaded on mobile phones and tablets which provide up to date guidance, support and signposting to a range of employee physical and mental health support services.

In September 2020, working in collaboration with the Samaritans and the Zero Suicide Alliance, HMPPS introduced a staff self-harm and suicide prevention campaign, Reach Out, Save Lives. Backed by the Lord Chancellor, the campaign drives a consistent message about reaching out to support one another and seeking assistance and aims to impact and challenge cultural norms around a publicly sensitive topic.

HMPPS Occupational Health and Employee Assistance policy and the Post Incident Care policy are in place to support staff.

A comprehensive section on Stress Risk Assessment is available on the employee intranet Health and Safety site. Guidance includes a stress toolkit designed for both employees and managers.

## ■ Prisons: Safety

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**

**[112143]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of trends in staff sickness rates on safety in prisons.

**Damian Hinds:**

The safety of staff and prisoners is a key priority. Staff sickness can impact our ability to provide a full regime to prisoners and properly manage those at risk of self-harm and violence. This is why action to ensure prisons are sufficiently resourced is a priority.

We are constantly monitoring a wide range of staff resource data across the estate, including Target Staffing Figures and Staff in Post, and making interventions where necessary. Where staffing levels are being impacted by rates of sickness above that which a prison is profiled for, and establishments feel that sickness rates or other factors will impact on stability and safety in a prison, additional support is available for the prison. This can include National Detached Duty, where staff are deployed to other prisons to manage temporary staffing shortfalls, and Operational Stability Payment (incentivised Payment Plus).

We continue to deliver services to support staff, both to prevent staff absences due to sickness and to enable staff to return to work. These include referrals to HMPPS' independent third-party provider Occupational Health, access to Care Teams, 24-hour assistance counselling through the PAM Assist helpline and TRiM (Trauma Risk Management), which is a trauma-focused peer support system.

Information on the average working days lost due to sickness per prison staff member is publicly available, and can be found at [HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2022), in the document named HMPPS workforce statistics bulletin: September 2022 tables.

## ■ Wandsworth Prison: Prisoners

**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** **[112142]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were held at Wandsworth Prison on 10 December 2022.

**Damian Hinds:**

The total population and capacity of the prison estate is published weekly at [Prison population statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-population-statistics). The population and capacity of each individual prison (including HMP/YOI Wandsworth) is published monthly at the same link. As set out in this publication, as at Friday 25th November 2022 (the latest date for which figures are available), the population of HMP/YOI Wandsworth was 1615.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

## ■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme

**Ellie Reeves:** **[903001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of refugees admitted under the Homes for Ukraine scheme who are homeless.

**Felicity Buchan:**

As of 18 November, local authorities in England accepted homelessness duties to 2,985 Ukrainian households across all visa schemes; 915 were single households and 2,070 family households.

1,720 homelessness duties were owed to households who arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Figures show only a very small fraction of Ukrainian arrivals have had a homelessness duty accepted and councils have a duty to ensure families are not left without a roof over their head.

## ■ Local Government Finance

**Justin Madders:**

[\[902996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the sustainability of local government finances.

**Lee Rowley:**

We continue to work closely with local government, as we always do, meeting regularly with sector representative bodies and councils to monitor budgets and service delivery.

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023/24 makes available up to an additional £5 billion to councils, an increase of 9% in cash terms on 2022/23. We are consulting on these proposals until 16 January.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Harriett Baldwin:**

[\[112087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for West Worcestershire, dated October 19 2022 to Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP on behalf of the Malvern Hills Trust Chief Executive.

**Lee Rowley:**

A response was issued to my Hon. Friend today.

## ■ Refugees: Ukraine

**Lilian Greenwood:**

[\[112082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the mental health and therapeutic support available for (a) Ukrainian child refugees and (b) other Ukrainian refugees.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Ukrainians fleeing their home and arriving in the UK under Homes for Ukraine are guaranteed free access to NHS healthcare, including mental health care services and registration with a GP.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development: Finance

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[902997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that funds are delivered promptly to successful Levelling Up bids.

**Dehenna Davison:**

We will announce the outcome of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund by the end of January 2023, which will see much needed investment awarded to help level up communities across the UK.

We will follow up with successful applicants promptly once the announcement is made to ensure that spend and delivery can get underway as quickly as possible.

## ■ Sleeping Rough

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[902998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to address the potential increase in the level of rough sleeping this winter.

**Felicity Buchan:**

People at risk of sleeping rough this winter are being supported by the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which is providing up to £500 million across 2022-25. This supports 303 local authorities across England and funds around 14,000 beds and 3,000 support staff this year.

Our Night Shelter Transformation Fund 22-25 is also providing faith and community groups with up to £10 million funding to provide self-contained emergency accommodation.

These initiatives are part of the £2 billion of funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years.

## TRANSPORT

## ■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[113471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, What steps he is taking to ensure that the provisions of the National Bus Strategy benefit (a) Bosworth constituency and (b) other rural areas.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The National Bus Strategy emphasises the importance of addressing the needs of those in rural as well as urban areas, and the Government remains committed to ensuring that those in rural areas have decent transport services.

The Department has awarded Leicestershire County Council a total of £732,881 to help it develop and deliver measures to improve bus services across the county through its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Enhanced Partnership with bus operators.

All Local Transport Authorities have also been asked, as part of the development of their BSIPs, to consider the potential role of demand-responsive transport (DRT) in improving access to bus services in rural areas. The Department is also funding 17 DRT pilot projects through the Rural Mobility Fund, worth £20 million, which will improve our understanding of the viability of this type of bookable service in rural and suburban settings. As part of this, Leicestershire County Council was awarded £1.3 million in 2021 to trial its FoxConnect DRT service.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[113349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is providing support to local authorities to help them install electric vehicle charging points in council-owned garages.

**Jesse Norman:**

Public sector organisations, as well as social housing providers and private landlords, can apply for the EV chargepoint grant. Grants of up to £350 are available for landlords towards the cost of purchasing and installing a chargepoint, with up to 200 grants a year available per applicant. Additional support is available to help install multiple chargepoints, for example in residential car parks, with grants of up to £30,000 available.

## ■ Freeport East

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[114797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of existing rail infrastructure in supporting the Freeport East project.

**Huw Merriman:**

We recognise the potential opportunities for the UK generated by Freeport East at the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich, as well as the value of rail access to ports, with schemes such as the partial doubling of the Felixstowe branch line completing in 2019. Freeport status will be considered in relation to transport upgrades in the region.

## ■ High Speed 2 Line: Birmingham

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[114692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which areas to the north of Birmingham on the West Coast Mainline will have increased (a) train paths and (b) platforms following the construction of phase two of HS2.

**Huw Merriman:**

HS2 will provide high-speed inter-city services on dedicated lines that will free up train paths and platforms on the southern end of the West Coast Main Line, and generate much-needed additional network capacity. The indicative train service assumptions that underpinned the IRP and inform the HS2 and NPR business cases included HS2 services to several destinations on the north end of the West Coast Main Line.

Platform capacity at Crewe will increase as a result of the arrival of HS2 services. There will be 16 platforms in the new station layout, an increase of 4. Some of these will be bay platforms which will remove the conflict of mainline services such as HS2 and regional services, possibly opening up further timetabling options. Works to

platforms at Preston and Carlisle are also planned as part of HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg.

No final decisions have been made on the train service that will run when HS2 becomes operational. These decisions will be taken nearer the time, drawing on advice from the West Coast Partnership and Network Rail, and will be subject to public consultation.

## ■ High Speed 2 Line: North West

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[114691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Annex Two to the paper entitled HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg: Crewe to Manchester: An Update on the Strategic Outline Business Case, published by his Department on 24 January 2022, whether the Indicative Train Service Specification has been superseded by an updated version.

**Huw Merriman:**

Annex Two to the paper entitled HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg: Crewe to Manchester: An Update on the Strategic Outline Business Case, published by this Department on 24 January 2022 provided two indicative train service specifications (iTSS) – a central scenario which assumed that the Golborne Link formed part of the scheme, and an alternative scenario in which the Golborne Link was not constructed. In June 2022, with the removal of the Golborne Link from the High-Speed (Crewe-Manchester) Bill, the alternative scenario as published in January 2022 became the central scenario. There have been no further changes to the iTSS beyond this. An updated iTSS for Northern Powerhouse Rail services will be incorporated in future.

No final decisions have been made on the train service that will run when HS2 becomes operational. These decisions will be taken nearer the time, drawing on advice from the West Coast Partnership and Network Rail, and will be subject to public consultation.

## ■ High Speed Two: Finance

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

[\[114693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to update the budget for HS2 to reflect the level of inflation since Q3 2019; and whether his Department plans to provide additional funding to reflect the level of inflation.

**Huw Merriman:**

Along with the rest of the construction sector and wider economy, HS2 is currently experiencing very high levels of inflation. Following the Autumn Statement we are working through how to manage the impact of inflation and will set out any changes in due course.



## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Dorset

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[113160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data his Department holds on the number of lorries that used the lorry park at Brocks Pine off the A31 at St Leonards, Dorset, in each of the last 12 months for which information is available; and whether Highways England have been requested to close or relocate that facility.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The government does not regularly collect this information. As part of the National Survey of Lorry Parking, published in September 2022, the utilisation level for Brocks Pine, A31, Ringwood, Hampshire was at 50% (8 HGVs and a total capacity of 16). This is a one-off snapshot (one Thursday night in March 2022) taken from the overnight audits completed. No further information is held.

## ■ Motorways

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[113358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December to Question 109583, on Motorways whether his Department collects data on response times to each incident in which a vehicle is stranded in a live lane on All Lane Running Motorways.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

National Highways provides the Department with a monthly summary of traffic officer attendance time data. This covers, for all incident types, the time from when we are first made aware of an incident, to when a traffic officer arrives at the incident on all lane running smart motorways where emergency areas are more than a mile apart.

The average response time in November was 9 minutes and 22 seconds.

## ■ National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[113252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what oversight his Department has of the governance of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport has no responsibility for, or oversight of, the RMT's governance, which is a matter for that trade union.

## ■ Northern Trains: Tickets

**Cat Smith:**

[\[114695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department was required to authorise the decision by Northern Trains to withdraw Advance Purchase on Departure rail fares from sale at ticket offices.

**Cat Smith:**

[\[114696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if an impact assessment has been undertaken of the decision by Northern Trains to withdraw Advance Purchase on Departure rail fares from sale at ticket offices.

**Cat Smith:**

[\[114697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the affordability of Northern Trains rail fares of the operator's decision to withdraw Advance Purchase on Departure rail fares from sale at ticket offices.

**Huw Merriman:**

The removal of Advance Purchase Tickets on the Day from ticket offices is a decision for the operator.

Advance tickets are still available for purchase until the day before travel from ticket offices but are no longer available as Advance Purchase on the Day products.

Advance Purchase on the Day products are still available through Ticket Vending Machines and digital channels.

#### ■ Pedestrian Areas: Visual Impairment

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[113435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the petition handed into Number 10 on 18th October 2022, if he will meet representatives of the National Federation of the Blind to discuss floating bus stops.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

Provision of traffic management measures such as floating bus stops is a matter for local authorities. The Department provides design advice on floating bus stops in Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design, which highlights the potential issues and stresses the need for early engagement on design with relevant groups, particularly those representing disabled people.

The Department is aware of the NFBUK's views on floating bus stop bypasses, through meetings and correspondence with officials. We will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders as we develop policies on this and other matters.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[113436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy that future travel schemes will ensure direct access from the pavement to the bus.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The 2021 National Bus Strategy (NBS), *Bus Back Better*, outlined the government's vision for bus services to be accessible and inclusive by design. This extends to bus stops and bus stations. It also detailed the government's expectation that all Local Transport Plans will include measures to upgrade supporting infrastructure to facilitate independent, accessible journeys.

In addition, the NBS mandated that all English Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside London were required to publish Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), which must be aligned with wider Local Transport Plans. These set out the local vision for the step-change in bus services that is needed; driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want. The Department's BSIP guidance recognised the importance of LTAs investing in accessible and inclusive bus services. It did this by outlining that not only the vehicles must be accessible to everyone, but also the bus stops and bus stations; so that everyone can travel on buses with confidence.

Local Authorities must comply with equalities law when upgrading or investing in new bus stops and stations infrastructure.

## ■ Railways: Mobile Phones

**Luke Pollard:**

**[113461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to help increase mobile phone connectivity on trainlines in the South West.

**Huw Merriman:**

Complimentary Wi-Fi is available on all trains in the South West of England.

Good progress has recently been made by the Department in understanding the technical barriers of ensuring improved mobile phone connectivity, including in tunnels and rural areas. Research has been conducted to evaluate the characteristics of different tunnels, how they block signal and what technical solutions could be implemented to extend mobile coverage into tunnels. Additionally, research has been undertaken to look at the effect train carriage walls have on signals, which often impair the level of connectivity passengers can access.

These reports are both available to read via the following links:

Report on Mobile Connectivity in rolling stock –radio frequency attenuation characteristics

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1032931/mobile-connectivity-in-rolling-stock-radio-frequency-attenuation-characteristics.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1032931/mobile-connectivity-in-rolling-stock-radio-frequency-attenuation-characteristics.pdf)

Report on GB Rail Tunnel Signal Propagation & Wireless Connectivity Options

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1098262/11160-DfT\\_220303\\_DfT\\_Tunnel\\_Propagation\\_Study\\_FINAL\\_accessible1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1098262/11160-DfT_220303_DfT_Tunnel_Propagation_Study_FINAL_accessible1.pdf)

The Department is continuing to work closely with Network Rail, Department for Culture Media and Sport, and other Government departments to reduce the commercial and technical barriers to improving mobile connectivity along the entire rail corridor.

**■ Railways: Strikes****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[113273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what minimum level of service is being considered by his Department as part of secondary legislation to safeguard a minimum level of rail service in the context of the recent strikes by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Government's priority is to improve the current service delivered to passengers. Any regulations will rightfully balance the rights of workers to strike, with the rights of the public to get on with their daily lives.

**■ Shrewsbury-Wolverhampton Railway Line: Strikes****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[113251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of industrial action by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers on rail services between Shrewsbury and Birmingham.

**Huw Merriman:**

The industry is taking all possible steps to ensure that as much of the railway as possible operates during periods of industrial action and that passengers are kept fully informed of the impact of disruption. Service levels during recent periods of industrial action varied by region. To ensure services run safely and reliably, Network Rail and train operating companies implement a Key Route Strategy focusing limited resources on those routes with the busiest passenger and freight traffic and on strike days, this means around 20 per cent of passenger services run, with a focus on protecting critical passenger and freight flows. Unfortunately, this means that on RMT strike days, generally there are no Transport for Wales, West Midlands Trains or Avanti West Coast services between Shrewsbury and Birmingham. My officials and I remain committed to playing our part in bringing a swift resolution to the industrial disputes.

**■ Surfing: Dorset****Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[113158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects Highways England will give a substantive response as a statutory consultee to the planning application submitted by WHWhite Limited to Dorset Council in November 2021 for a surf lagoon on land adjacent to the A31 at St Leonards; and for what reason the response has been delayed.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

National Highways has been working with the applicant and their transport consultants for some time to resolve questions with this development. National Highways requested further information on 8 December 2022, which is still outstanding, as well as clarification of a number of other points.

## ■ Train Operating Companies: Finance

**Wera Hobhouse:**

**[113403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2022 on Train Operating Companies: Finance, whether Train Operating Companies are being asked to forward plan within (a) an absolute cost envelope or (b) a net cost envelope.

**Huw Merriman:**

Train Operating Companies are asked to propose plans that consider both the absolute and net costs.

## TREASURY

## ■ Business: Payment Methods

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

**[113356]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of businesses that accept cash payments by (a) sector and (b) geographical area.

**Andrew Griffith:**

As technology and consumer behaviour changes, it should remain the choice of individual organisations as to whether to accept or decline any form of payment, including cash or card, based on their consideration of factors such as customer preference and cost.

Nonetheless, the Government recognises that many people continue to transact in cash across the UK and engages closely with financial regulators to monitor and assess trends relating to cash. Research published by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in 2020 found that 98% of small businesses would never turn away a customer if they needed to pay by cash.

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 support local businesses to continue accepting cash.

Further details about the Financial Services and Markets Bill can be found on the Parliament website: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3326>

## ■ Capital Gains Tax: Devolution

**Kenny MacAskill:**

**[112173]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent requests have been received from the Scottish Government for the devolution of Capital Gains Tax.

**John Glen:**

The Treasury has not received any recent requests from the Scottish Government in relation to further tax devolution. The UK Government remains committed to the tax devolution agreed by the multi-party Smith Commission.

**■ Charities: Cost of Living****Barbara Keeley:**[\[113214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings on the impact of the cost of living crisis on charities his Department had with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

We recognise this is a worrying time for many organisations that are facing pressures due to the cost-of-living crisis and the Treasury regularly engages DCMS on policy matters that impact sectors for which DCMS are responsible, including charities. We do not hold specific data on the number of times this was discussed in meetings during 2022.

To tackle the cost-of-living crisis, the Government is already taking very significant action across the United Kingdom. Through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS), the government is providing a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic consumers, including charities. This is a temporary measure that protects them from soaring energy costs and applies to energy usage for six months from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. The ongoing HMT-led review of the EBRS will determine support for UK non-domestic energy consumers beyond these six months, with the aim of reducing the public finances' exposure to volatile international energy prices from April 2023. The Chancellor will announce the outcome of this review shortly to ensure businesses have sufficient certainty about future support before the current scheme ends in March 2023.

This builds upon the support for charities that the Government announced during the pandemic, which included a £750 million dedicated funding package that helped organisations across the UK respond to the impact of Covid-19.

**■ Cooperatives: Government Assistance****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[113344\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support the co-operative sector across the UK.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[113345\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the contribution of the co-operative sector to the UK economy.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[113346\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to increase co-operative and employee ownership of business.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government is committed to having a thriving co-operatives sector and creating a modern and supportive business environment in the UK. The Government acknowledges the vital contribution co-operatives make to the economy, serving local communities up and down the UK. For instance, the Co-op Economy Report 2021 conducted by the trade body Co-operatives UK found that co-operatives contributed £39.7 billion to the UK economy in 2021, up £1.1 billion from 2020.

At Budget 2021, the Government announced the £150m Community Ownership Fund. This allows community groups to bid for up to £250,000 matched-funding to help them buy or take over local community assets at risk of being lost and run them as community-owned businesses, supporting co-operative entrepreneurship. To date, 71 projects across the UK have benefitted from the fund.

Most recently, the Government is supporting a Private Members' Bill on Co-operatives, Mutual Insurers, and Friendly Societies, which will grant HM Treasury the power to bring forward regulations to give those mutuals further flexibility in determining for themselves the best strategies for their business regarding their surplus capital.

Furthermore, the Government also aims to continue to develop a modern and supportive business environment to set co-operatives and mutuals up for success. As part of this, the Government is currently exploring options for reviewing key pieces of legislation underpinning the co-operatives and mutuals sectors.

**■ Coronavirus: China****Tom Hunt:****[114815]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing covid-19 infections in China on the rate of inflation in the UK.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Since mid-2021, inflation has been pushed higher by global pressures, such as supply chain disruptions from Covid-19 and Russia's war against Ukraine, which has raised energy prices. More recently, tightening in the labour market means that domestic factors are now playing a role.

The Government is mindful of both the domestic and international risks that might affect the UK economy. We monitor these risks closely, including the rise in Covid-19 cases in China.

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility is the government's official forecaster and will publish its next forecast on the economy, including for inflation, on 15 March.

## ■ Corporation Tax

**James Murray:** [113466]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimate of the cost to the public purse, including money spent IT systems and staff, of the decision to cancel the freeze in the rate of Corporation Tax announced on 23 September 2022 and to increase the rate to 25 per cent.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Estimates of the IT and administrative costs associated with the increase in the rate of Corporation Tax were set out in the tax information impact note (TIIN) published at Spring Budget 2021 when the rate increase was announced.

## ■ Credit Rating

**John Spellar:** [114534]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people who have (a) no credit record, (b) an insufficient credit record and (c) no recent credit history.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The Government does not hold information on the number of people who have limited or no credit history on their credit files.

However, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recently published an interim report on its Credit Information Market Study, which may include information and insights relevant to this question. It can be found at:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/market-studies/ms19-1-credit-information-market-study>

## ■ Cryptoassets

**Jim Shannon:** [113223]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits of crypto (a) currencies and (b) assets to society.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The government's ambition is to make the UK a global hub for cryptoasset technology and investment. In April, previous Ministers set out a number of reforms which will see the regulation and aspects of tax treatment of cryptoassets evolve.

The Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee has noted that the underlying technologies behind cryptoassets could bring a number of benefits to financial services, including reduced transaction costs and greater operational resilience.

For instance, certain stablecoins could drive transformational changes in financial markets and offer consumers new ways to transact and invest. Increased competition between existing UK payment systems could also potentially lead to lower costs and improved services in the long run. The Financial Services and Markets Bill will allow



HMT to bring stablecoins within the regulatory perimeter where they are used as a form of payment. This legislation will ensure that the UK's regulatory framework is equipped to harness benefits of stablecoins, supporting the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, while mitigating the potential risks.

Recent events in cryptoasset markets have highlighted the importance of establishing regulation which supports safe innovation and protects consumers and stability. The government will consult on its approach to regulating wider cryptoasset activities in the coming weeks.

The government and the Cryptoasset taskforce continue to closely monitor the wider cryptoasset market and will stand ready to take further regulatory action if required.

## ■ High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[114565\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to uprate the threshold for the High Income Child Benefit Charge in line with inflation.

**John Glen:**

The Government is committed to managing the public finances in a disciplined and responsible way, by targeting support where it is most needed.

The Government considers that the HICBC threshold of £50,000 remains appropriate at the moment. Maintaining the threshold means that the Government supports the majority of families, whilst ensuring the fiscal position remains sustainable.

Nevertheless, the Government knows that families across the UK are worried about the cost of living. This is why the Government has provided support to households for their energy bills through the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme, the £150 Council Tax rebate (for households in Council Tax bands A, B, C and D), and the Energy Price Guarantee. The Energy Price Guarantee will be extended until April 2024, and is expected to save the typical household in Great Britain around £500 in 2023-24.

## ■ Income Tax: Tax Rates and Bands

**James Murray:**

[\[113467\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimate of the cost to the public purse, including money spent IT systems and support staff, of the decision not to cut the basic rate of income tax, announced in the Autumn Statement 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

There was no cost incurred by the decision not to cut the basic rate of income tax. HMRC did not implement the basic rate changes in their systems before the Autumn Statement 2022 so there was no cost involved with maintaining the basic rate at 20 per cent.

**James Murray:**

[\[113468\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimate of the cost to the public purse, including on IT systems and support staff, of the decision to reintroduce the additional rate of income tax in the Autumn Statement 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

There was no cost incurred by the decision to reintroduce the additional rate of income tax in the Autumn Statement 2022.

HMRC did not implement the additional rate changes in their systems before the Autumn Statement 2022 so there was no cost involved with maintaining the additional rate at 45 per cent.

## ■ Investment Income: Taxation

**James Murray:**

[\[113469\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimate of the cost to the public purse, including money spent IT systems and support staff, of reintroducing the Dividend Tax rise in the Autumn Statement 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The TIIN for this measure, published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) alongside the Autumn Budget 2021, set out the following: *"This measure will increase each rate by 1.25 per cent to 8.75 per cent 33.75 per cent and 39.35 per cent from April 2022, HMRC will need to make changes to IT systems to deliver this change which is currently estimated to cost in the region of 530,000 thousand pounds."* There was no administrative cost resulting from the announcements of the reversal at the Growth Plan, and then continuation of the rate change announced afterward.

## ■ Mortgages: Government Assistance

**Rosie Duffield:**

[\[113395\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to provide financial support to people experiencing significant increases in their mortgage costs following the end of a fixed-term mortgage agreement.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Around 75% of residential mortgage borrowers are currently on fixed-rate deals and therefore shielded from interest rate rises in the near term. If mortgage borrowers do fall into financial difficulty, or think they may struggle to keep up with payments once their fixed term comes to an end, it is vital they make contact with their lender early. FCA guidance requires firms to provide support through tailored forbearance options. Lenders affirmed that they stand ready to use the forbearance tools available to them to help vulnerable mortgage borrowers at a roundtable hosted by the Chancellor in December.

The Government has also taken a number of measures aimed at helping people to avoid repossession, including offering Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans for

those in receipt of an income-related benefit. From spring, the Government will allow those on Universal Credit to apply for an SMI loan to help with interest repayments after three months, instead of nine. We will also abolish the zero earnings rule to allow claimants to continue receiving support while in work and on Universal Credit. In addition, the Government offers mortgage borrowers protection in the courts through the Pre-Action Protocol, which makes clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders.

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

#### ■ Off-payroll Working

**James Murray:**

[\[113470\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the estimate of the cost to the public purse, including money spent IT systems and support staff, of removing and reinstating IR35 rules in 2022.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government did not incur any additional costs as a result of the announcement of the repeal and subsequent reinstatement of the off-payroll working rules.

#### ■ Off-payroll Working: Scotland

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[113364\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department have made with HMRC on the number of people in Scotland that have reached settlements for breaches of IR35 rules.

**Victoria Atkins:**

For compliance activity relating to the off-payroll working rules, HMRC does not maintain records that provide a breakdown by specific regions or nations of the UK.

#### ■ Private Rented Housing

**Patricia Gibson:**

[\[113337\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on permitting private landlords to offset their mortgage interest payments against rental income before income tax is calculated.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Landlords are able to claim tax relief on finance costs (including mortgage interest payments) for their rental property at the basic rate of income tax.

From 2017, the Government phased in a set of reforms to restrict finance cost relief to the equivalent of the basic rate of income tax. This ensures fairness in the income tax system, as previously higher rate taxpayers received a more generous tax relief than those on lower incomes. The reforms mean that all landlords will now receive the same amount of relief. It also reduces the disparity in income tax treatment between homeowners and landlords.

The Government believes that only a small proportion of landlords will be affected by this measure. However, the Government will keep this under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken in the context of the wider public finances.

**■ Property: Investment Trusts****James Murray:**[\[111736\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of real estate investment trusts in each of the last six financial years.

**Victoria Atkins:**

An estimate of the cost of the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) tax relief is not available.

While a REIT is exempt from corporation tax on the income and gains of its property rental business, it is subject to a requirement to distribute its income to its investors, and these distributions are subject to a withholding tax. For UK investors these distributions are taxable as profits of a UK property rental business.

The regime collects the appropriate tax from the investors rather than the REIT and, as a result, there is no comparison between the taxation of a REIT and a standard UK company.

**James Murray:**[\[111737\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the Real Estate Investment Trust tax relief for UK single company Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and REIT groups within the (a) FTSE 100 index and (b) FTSE 250 index in each of the last six financial years.

**Victoria Atkins:**

An estimate of the cost of the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) tax relief is not available in these ways.

While a REIT is exempt from corporation tax on the income and gains of its property rental business, it is subject to a requirement to distribute its income to its investors, and these distributions are subject to a withholding tax. For UK investors these distributions are taxable as profits of a UK property rental business.

The regime collects the appropriate tax from the investors rather than the REIT and, as a result, there is no comparison between the taxation of a REIT and a standard UK company.

## ■ Public Expenditure

**Pat McFadden:**

[\[114622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to table E.2 in the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, HC 822, published on 27 October 2021, how much is budgeted in the reserve for the (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25 financial years.

**John Glen:**

At Autumn Statement the latest Resource and Capital figures were published for the reserves in financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25. These can be found in Table 2.1 and 2.2 of the Autumn Statement 2022 document and are as follows:

Resource budgets (excluding depreciation) - £10.7 billion (2022-23), £13.9 billion (2023-24) and £12.9 billion (2024-25).

Capital budgets - £4.1 billion (2022-23), £3.3 billion (2023-24) and £3.2 billion (2024-25).

## ■ Tax Avoidance: Scotland

**Drew Hendry:**

[\[113363\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with HM Revenue and Customs on estimates of how many people in Scotland are affected by the loan charge.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Following the Independent Loan Charge Review, HMRC estimates that around 9,500 individuals will be removed from the scope of the Loan Charge. This analysis is not broken down by location.

## ■ Treasury: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[113255\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's publication of government procurement card spending over £500 for March 2021, what items were purchased under the category IT/Office Equipment from TheWarehouseOnline.co.uk, on 30 March 2021; and for what purpose those items were required by his Department.

**James Cartlidge:**

This purchase was for a replacement heavy duty paper shredder.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Carer's Allowance**

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[113365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance also have earnings from paid employment.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[113367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance also had earnings from paid employment in the latest period for which data is available.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The latest data available on how many unpaid carers are in receipt of Carer's Allowance and have earnings from paid employment comes from the Family Resources Survey 2020/21 linked with DWP admin data.

The department estimates that around 175,000 (less than one in five) Carer's Allowance recipients were declaring earnings to the department at the time they responded to the survey.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[113368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of raising the earnings threshold for Carer's Allowance to work for up to (a) 16 and (b) 21 hours a week at National Living Wages rates for 2023/24.

**Vicky Foxcroft:** [\[113369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of raising the earnings threshold for Carer's Allowance to (1) £167 and (2) £219 per week in 2023-24.

**Tom Pursglove:**

In November 2022, the department committed to increasing the Carer's Allowance earnings threshold from £132 to £139 net earnings per week from April 2023.

The department estimates that the additional Carer's Allowance Annually Managed Expenditure in 2023/24, from linking the weekly earnings limit to 16 hours work at National Living Wage levels and raising it to £167 a week, would be approximately £30 million. The corresponding figure for linking it to 21 hours work and raising it to £219 a week is around £90 million.

**■ Carers: Household Support Fund**

**Helen Hayes:** [\[114723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many unpaid carers have received support from the Household Support Fund since its launch.

**Mims Davies:**

We do not collect this information. The published management information for the Household Support Fund covering the period 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 reports total grant allocation and spend, number of awards and the percentage spent on families with children, which relates to the condition that at least 50% of that grant be spent on families with children.

[Household Support Fund management information: 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Management information for subsequent schemes will be published in due course.

**■ Christmas Bonus: Uprating****Jonathan Edwards:****[113260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring that the annual Christmas bonus to recipients of benefits is increased in line with inflation.

**Laura Trott:**

The Christmas Bonus is an annual, tax-free, lump sum payment to pensioners and to working age people who are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits during the relevant week which is usually the first full week in December.

The bonus was initially introduced as a one-off payment of £10 in 1972 and has not been uprated or increased on a yearly basis. The Government remains committed to providing support to pensioners and others who receive the payments and has no current plans to revise the arrangements.

**■ Disability: Finance****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[114539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional financial support to (a) disabled people and (b) their carers.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, including disabled people and unpaid carers, and has taken further, decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The Energy Price Guarantee is supporting millions of households with rising energy costs in addition to other cost of living support announced last 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 receipt of an eligible disability benefit 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 an eligible means-tested benefit, which includes households on low incomes which include disabled people or an unpaid carer;
- A one-off payment of £300 as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November to pensioner households.

Following the Secretary of State's statutory annual review of up-rating, from April 2023 the State Pension and benefits will increase by 10.1%, in line with the increase in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in the year to September 2022. This includes benefits paid to disabled people and unpaid carers, including Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Universal Credit, and Pension Credit.

To ensure stability and certainty for households, the Government is making further cost of living support available in 2023/24. Households in receipt of eligible means-tested benefits will get up to a further £900 in Cost of Living Payments, people in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a further £150 payment, and pensioner households will receive a further £300 as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment. This is in addition to 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. 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 the additional Barnett funding.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Older People

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[113439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department are taking to support people over the age of 66 with mobility issues to lease a motor vehicle.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Motability Scheme is open to anyone who qualifies for the higher-rate mobility component for Disability Living Allowance (DLA), the enhanced rate of the mobility component for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the Armed Forces Independence Payment or the War Pensioners Mobility Supplement. Where claimants have an existing entitlement to a qualifying benefit when they reach pension age, this can continue for as long as that individual remains entitled and this would allow them to retain their Motability vehicle.

Attendance Allowance (AA) is intended to help those with a severe disability who have long term care or supervision needs which arise after reaching State Pension Age. It has never included a mobility component, and so cannot be used in payment for a leased Motability Scheme vehicle. Government mobility support is focused on



people who are disabled earlier in life, as developing mobility needs in older life is a normal consequence of ageing. While the intention is for AA to cover the need for care or supervision that an individual may face as a result of their disability, there is no constraint on what the benefit can be used for, and individual recipients can choose to use their AA to fund mobility aids.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[113277]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of sharing clinical markers to identify claimants who have been flagged for safeguarding reasons between Capita and his Department on the likelihood of those individuals making a successful claim for personal independence payment.

**Tom Pursglove:**

DWP do not receive clinical markers from the NHS or have a safeguarding clinical marker on our systems.

In some cases, claimants may not be able to engage effectively with the claims process, due to reduced mental capacity or insight – for example, they may not understand the consequences of not returning a claim form and not have a personal acting body (PAB) to help them. In the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) journey, such claimants are considered to require Additional Support (AS) from DWP. They will have an AS marker attached to their case and elements of the PIP claims process have been adapted to provide further support for this group.

Having an AS marker does not automatically determine whether a claimant has direct entitlement to PIP or not, and there has been no assessment on the likelihood of individuals with AS markers making a successful claim for Personal Independence Payment.

For further information on Additional Support please see the PIP Assessment Guide section 1.12 [PIP assessment guide part 1: the assessment process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/PIP-assessment-guide-part-1-the-assessment-process).

## ■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

**[114729]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many assessments for personal independence were carried out by his Department by (a) phone, (b) video and (c) via paper-based assessment in each month since January 2021.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments carried out by (a) phone, (b) video and (c) paper-based assessment in each month from January 2021 are shown in the table below:

PIP ASSESSMENT CHANNEL	(A) TELEPHONE	(B) VIDEO	(C) PAPER-BASED REVIEW
Jan-21	53,650	80	10,970
Feb-21	52,810	50	10,480
Mar-21	60,110	60	10,800
Apr-21	48,640	30	9,760
May-21	46,250	30	9,840
Jun-21	51,110	30	10,490
Jul-21	51,970	40	10,810
Aug-21	45,810	440	9,930
Sep-21	49,570	720	10,590
Oct-21	49,810	690	10,520
Nov-21	54,740	730	11,500
Dec-21	43,050	1,140	9,440
Jan-22	58,680	2,620	12,170
Feb-22	54,600	3,470	13,170
Mar-22	58,900	4,330	15,050
Apr-22	49,390	4,190	12,950
May-22	59,260	4,490	13,710
Jun-22	52,680	6,040	13,790
Jul-22	53,370	6,060	14,380
Aug-22	55,640	5,230	14,910
Sep-22	54,340	5,710	15,540
Oct-22	56,450	6,740	15,990
Nov-22	60,680	8,210	18,340

**Please note**

- All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 10;

- All of the above data is derived from management information produced by the assessment providers;
- The above data is derived from unpublished management information which is collected for internal departmental use only and has not been quality assured to Official Statistics Publication standards;
- Telephone and video MI is drawn from a variety of non-contractual products, some of which were only available weekly, therefore some aggregation has been applied;
- Contractual MI became available for Capita from May 2022 and for Independent Assessment Services from August 2022.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[114739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Personal Independent Payment applicants who were assessed face-to-face, via telephone or via video call requested that their assessment be recorded, in each month since January 2021.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not available in the format requested. However, we can confirm that less than 1% of Personal Independence Payment claimants ask for their assessments to be recorded.

## ■ Skilled Workers

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[111594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding his Department provided to sector-based work academies in each of the last five years.

**Guy Opperman:**

Departmental funding to cover administration costs of delivering the scheme for financial year 2021/22 is £14.1m and for 2022/23 is £12m. The training element of SWAPs is funded separately through the adult education system.

Funding was not ring-fenced within the wider Jobcentre support offer and therefore cannot be identified.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[111595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of people who secured a job at the end of their participation in a sector-based work academy in each of the last five years.

**Guy Opperman:**

This information is not available. The outcome of the guaranteed job interview element of a Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) is not collected centrally.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[111596]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people participated in the Sector-based work academy programme in each of the last 5 years.

**Guy Opperman:**

Statistical releases on sector-based work academies, covering participation by those on legacy unemployment benefits, began in 2011 and ended in 2017.

These statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/employment-schemes-work-experience-sector-based-work-academy-and-skills-conditionality-starts-to-november-2017> The scheme was relaunched as 'SWAP' in July 2020 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs.

The breakdown of these starts by financial year is displayed in the following table:

Table 1: SWAP starts

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 - TO (11 <sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER)	TOTAL STARTS
Total SWAP Starts	64,500	87,400	70,040	221,940

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[111597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the budget of the DWP Train and Progress programme in each of the last five years.

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP Train and Progress is an additional flexible tool available as part of the broader menu of support options available to help claimants enter and progress in employment. DWP do not receive additional funding for this flexibility.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[111598]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people completed the DWP Training and Progress programme for each of the last five years.

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP Train and Progress is an additional flexible tool available as part of the broader menu of support options available to help claimants enter and progress in employment. DWP do not receive additional funding for this flexibility

## ■ State Retirement Pensions: Cost of Living

**Damien Moore:**

**[113445]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made a comparative assessment of the impact of receiving the (a) basic State Pension and (b)

new State Pension on recipients of those pensions, in the context of the cost of living crisis.

**Laura Trott:**

The Government understands the pressures pensioners are facing with the cost of living and has taken clear action to support all pensioners. Nearly 12 million pensioners will benefit from a 10.1% increase to their State Pension payments from April 2023, under the Triple Lock.

People on the basic State Pension can receive amounts of earnings-related additional State Pension or, if they were contracted-out, an occupational or private pension, or a combination of the two. In 2023/24, additional State Pension payments will also increase by 10.1%. Most people on the new State Pension do not receive the full rate, as the amount is based on an individual's National Insurance record paid both before and after 2016 when the new State Pension was introduced. Transitional arrangements are in place that reflect this and ensure fairness to both groups of people.

Pension Credit is an income-related benefit that targets help at the poorest pensioners, whether they reached State Pension age before or after the introduction of the new State Pension.

In addition, all Pensioner households have been supported by a £300 Cost of Living payment in 2022/23. In 2023/24 a further Cost of Living payment will be made. More than eight million pensioner households will receive an additional £300 to help with bills.

The Government's Energy Price Guarantee, running from October 2022-March 2023, saves a typical British household around £900 this winter, based on what the energy price would have been under the current price cap – reducing bills by roughly a third. This is in addition to 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. To ensure stability and certainty for households, the Government is providing a further £26bn in cost of living support for 2023/24.

Pensioners can also benefit from the discretionary Household Support Fund for which the government has provided total funding of £2.5 billion.

This is a substantial package of support which recognises the current additional costs faced by pensioners.

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[113448]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to take steps to compensate people on benefits who have been diagnosed with cancer, in the context of the cost of living crisis.

**Tom Pursglove:**

While there are no plans to compensate people on benefits who have been diagnosed with cancer specifically, the department is providing additional financial

support to those who qualify for health and disability related benefits during the cost of living emergency.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The Government's Energy Price Guarantee, running from October 2022- March 2023, will save a typical British household around £900 this winter, based on what the energy price would have been under the current price cap – reducing bills by roughly a third. 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.

In 2023/24, the Government is protecting the most vulnerable in society, many of whom face the biggest challenge making their incomes stretch, by increasing benefits in line with inflation. This means that they will rise by September Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation – 10.1%. Up-rating working age and disability benefits will cost £11bn next year. More than 10 million working age families will see their benefit payments rise from April 2023.

To ensure stability and certainty for households, the Government is providing £26bn in cost of living support for 2023/24. This includes Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable. In 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to a further £900 in Cost of Living Payments. Individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will also receive a £150 payment. Also included is 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 we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £2.5 billion. In England, this will be delivered through an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £842 million, running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, which local authorities use to help households with the cost of essentials. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

## ■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

**Abena Oppong-Asare:**

**[113450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department is taking steps to help support single, female pensioners, who were given inadequate notice of State Pension age changes, including support over the winter months.

**Laura Trott:**

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it was going to make the State Pension age the same for men and women. Both the High Court and Court of Appeal have found no fault with the actions of the DWP, under successive governments dating back to 1995, finding we acted entirely lawfully and did not discriminate on any grounds.

This Government is committed to providing a financial safety net for those who need it through the welfare system, including when they near or reach retirement. In addition, we supported people with the cost of living through £37 billion of support in 2022-23. We are acting to ensure support continues. To ensure stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement the Government has announced £26bn in cost of living support for 2023/24. This includes Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable households, an additional £1 billion to help with the cost of household essentials next year and the amended Energy Price Guarantee which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

Pensioners who are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2022 to 2023, will get an extra payment of £300 per household paid with their normal payment from November 2022 meaning this winter over 8 million pensioner households across the UK will receive an increased Winter Fuel Payment. Households with someone of State Pension age will receive £500 and households with someone aged 80 or over will receive £600.

This increased Winter Fuel Payment will be paid on top of any other one-off support a pensioner household is entitled to, for example where they are on Pension Credit or receive eligible disability benefits.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[113281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an estimate of the cost to the public purse of extending the £20 Universal Credit uplift to legacy benefit claimants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Guy Opperman:**

No such assessment has been made and it would incur disproportionate costs to make an estimate at this stage.

## ■ Veterans: Employment

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[114775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department is taking steps to advertise the services of veteran work coaches to veterans transitioning to civilian employment.

**Mims Davies:**

The Department remains committed to the Armed Forces Covenant and will do what is necessary to help and support members of the Armed Forces Community to transition to civilian life. We introduced our new model for Armed Forces Champions in 2021, which comprises 50 Armed Forces Champions working alongside 11 Group Leads at managerial level. It means for the first time that there is at least one Armed Forces Champion in each Jobcentre Plus District and resources in the new network are targeted where there are particularly high levels of demand.

In addition to the Armed Forces Champions roles, all Work Coaches are trained to provide veterans and others with the help and support they need.

We have also introduced an Armed Forces “identifier” on to the Universal Credit system, giving customers the opportunity to tell us whether they are a veteran or currently serving. This will help us ensure that veterans and serving personnel receive any additional support they need, whether directly from a Work Coach or through sign-posting to other support.

We also have a range of other support arrangements in place for members of the Armed Forces community. For example, veterans are given early voluntary entry to the Work and Health Programme.

Information about the support is readily available on gov.uk and can be accessed using the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobcentre-plus-services-for-the-armed-forces-and-their-families>



## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### WORK AND PENSIONS

#### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[107067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what his Department spent in 2021 on purchasing goods and services with a value of less than £500 on a government procurement card.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 December 2022. The correct answer should have been:**

**Mims Davies:**

The total spent by the Department for Work and Pensions on items with a value of less than £500 on a Government Procurement card in 2021 was £36,488,921.81.

Source: GPC Transactions Folder – Discoverer

The total spent by the Department for Work and Pensions on items with a value of less than £500 on a Government Procurement Card (GPC) in 2021 was £8,507,730.65 (69,786 transactions).

Source: GPC data. This gives details of all transactions posted during the 2021 calendar year and includes expenditure as well as refunds. The figure quoted is net of refunds.

**Points to note:**

- The Government Procurement Card (GPC) is a purchasing solution specifically for low risk/ low value purchases, enabling Government to buy from particular suppliers that include both small and medium sized enterprises.
- The card transaction limit for Approval to Buy (A2B) transactions is £500. Approximately 96% of all transactions are A2B.
- The card transaction limit for a 'physical' card is £600, with exceptions allowed on approval of a supporting business case.
- Most GPC transactions are for Flexible Support Fund (FSF) expenditure, supporting claimants back into the workplace by covering costs associated with seeking employment, e.g. interview travel expenses.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Equalities update

**Minister for Women and Equalities (Kemi Badenoch):**

[\[HCWS482\]](#)

I would like to notify the House of the progress we are making in implementing our 2020 response to the Gender Recognition Act (2004) consultation. In particular, the House will wish to be aware that I will be updating the list of approved overseas countries and territories (provided for under Section 1(1)(b) of the Gender Recognition Act) to make sure it does not compromise the integrity of the Gender Recognition Act. This follows previous periodic updates.

The list of approved overseas countries and territories was last updated in 2011. A commitment was made to keeping the list under review.

There are now some countries and territories on the list who have made changes to their systems since then and would not now be considered to have equivalently rigorous systems. It should not be possible for a person who would not satisfy the criteria to obtain UK legal gender recognition in the UK to use the overseas recognition route to obtain a UK Gender Recognition Certificate in the UK. This would damage the integrity and credibility of the process of the Gender Recognition Act.

We are finalising details of overseas countries and territories to be removed from the list via an affirmative Statutory Instrument. These comprise countries and territories where there is a clear indication that the country now no longer has a system at least as rigorous as those in the Gender Recognition Act 2004. We are undertaking a thorough checking system to verify our understanding of each overseas system in question.

I will formally engage with other colleagues and Ministers from devolved governments in advance of laying the Statutory Instrument. The Government is committed to ensuring that this outcome of the Gender Recognition Act consultation is followed through and upheld, and the overseas list will be updated via Statutory Instrument more regularly in future.

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ The Future of Channel 4

**Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michelle Donelan):**

[\[HCWS476\]](#)

Channel 4 is a great British success story. It is an integral part of our public service broadcasting system - contributing to the UK's creative economy, providing greater choice for audiences, and supporting the booming British production sector. In fact, independent production in the UK is a now mature £3 billion industry, up from £500 million in 1995.

However, as the government set out in its [Broadcasting White Paper](#) last year, all public service broadcasters (PSBs) face challenges from structural changes in the broadcasting landscape. Channel 4, along with all other PSBs, is facing unprecedented competition for viewers, programmes and talent from overseas as well as new, rapidly-growing streaming platforms. It is important for the UK's thriving creative industries and the wider economy that we support our PSBs to grow, compete and to make high-quality, original content that people all over the UK love, trust and learn from.

Channel 4 is uniquely constrained in its ability to respond to these challenges. There are limits on Channel 4's ability to raise capital and its current operating model effectively stops it from making its own content. Under current legislation it operates as a publisher-broadcaster, meaning that all its shows are commissioned or acquired from third parties - such as independent producers or other broadcasters - who typically retain the rights to those programmes.

The challenges faced by Channel 4 are real. That is why the previous government decided to proceed with a sale of the business in order to free the broadcaster from the constraints holding it back under public ownership.

After careful examination of the business case for the sale of Channel 4 through the lens of this government's focus on economic stability and long-term sustainable growth and considered engagement, I have decided that pursuing a sale is not the best option to ease the challenges facing Channel 4, nor to support growth in the UK's creative economy - especially the independent production sector. However, doing nothing also carries risks, and the government believes change is necessary to ensure the Corporation can continue to thrive now and long into the future, in a rapidly changing media landscape.

After careful discussions with Channel 4, I am announcing a package of interventions that will ensure the broadcaster remains focused on sustainability and has new opportunities to grow while serving audiences in the decades to come with high-quality, innovative and distinctive content.

When parliamentary time allows, we will, through the Media Bill, introduce a statutory duty on Channel 4 to consider its sustainability as part of its decision making. We are also working with Channel 4 to agree updated governance structures that assure the government of Channel 4's long-term sustainability, including an updated Memorandum of Understanding between my Department and Channel 4 which will be made publicly available.

To assist in Channel 4 meeting its new obligation, we will provide them with new commercial flexibilities. Whilst ensuring that Channel 4 continues to play its key role in incubating and supporting the independent production sector, which often includes new and highly-innovative companies, I will look to relax the publisher-broadcaster restriction to enable Channel 4 to make some of its own content, and exploit Intellectual Property (IP) as other public service broadcasters are able to.

In determining how this relaxation should be designed and implemented, the government will work closely with the independent production sector and others to consider necessary

steps to ensure that Channel 4's important role in driving investment into the sector is safeguarded. Any changes to Channel 4's commissioning model would need to be introduced gradually, with appropriate checks and balances, and following consultation with the sector. For example, this will include increasing the level of Channel 4's independent production quota, which is currently set at 25 per cent of programmes; and potentially introducing specific protections for smaller, new and innovative independent producers.

As part of the package, Channel 4 has agreed to enhance its support for the independent TV production sector and regional roles and skills. It will increase its annual investment in 4Skills - its paid training and placement programme for young people - from £5 million to £10 million a year by 2025. It will double its number of roles outside London from its original target of 300 to reach 600 roles across the UK in 2025. This will include jobs in Channel 4's national HQ in Leeds, as well as in Glasgow, Manchester, Bristol and potentially elsewhere.

To enable Channel 4 to make investments that could put it on a more sustainable footing, we will also make it easier and simpler for Channel 4 to draw down on its private £75 million credit facility. In the event it pursues more ambitious investment opportunities to promote the Corporation's long term sustainability, we will support Channel 4 to access more private capital under its current borrowing limit of £200 million set in law - while taking steps to minimise the risk to public finances. We will also consider future requests to raise the organisation's borrowing limit if appropriate.

This package does not impact Channel 4's current 'out of London' or 'out of England' quotas, which are set in its broadcasting licence by Ofcom, and to which we would still expect Channel 4 to adhere.

Channel 4 will also include a new section in their annual report assessing the due impartiality of its news service and how the channel's content aims to demonstrate the highest editorial standards. This is important work that will add to transparency and focus and I look forward to seeing Channel 4's findings

Alongside the changes to Channel 4, the Media Bill will introduce a wide range of measures to modernise decades-old broadcasting regulations, including prominence reforms to increase the growth potential of the UK's public service broadcasters and foster innovations in the way TV is produced and consumed. Further details on the Media Bill will be announced in due course.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Update on farming payments policy

**Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries (Mark Spencer):** [\[HCWS483\]](#)

We are undertaking the most significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England in decades as we take England out of the Common Agricultural Policy. We are phasing out unfair and environmentally damaging farm subsidies, radically improving our services to farmers, providing one-off grants to support farm productivity, innovation,

research and development, and developing and expanding our schemes to pay farmers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production.

The reform is enabled by our manifesto commitment to guarantee an average of £2.4 billion to farmers and landowners in each year of this Parliament, with all funding released from Direct Payments reductions to be made available through our new grants and schemes.

The changes we are making are essential to help us grow and maintain a resilient, productive agriculture sector over the long term and at the same time achieve our ambitious targets for the environment and climate, playing our role in tackling these huge, global challenges. These reforms are about food and nature going hand in hand for all farmers, with environmental goods and services playing a key role in all farm businesses.

We have reviewed our plans for the Agricultural Transition, considered feedback from the sector, and lessons learned from the early stages of the agricultural transition. We are moving ahead with the transition, on the same timescale, and pressing ahead with our Environmental Land Management schemes, fine-tuning them to make sure they help to deliver our ambitious outcomes on the environment and support a thriving farming sector.

As I confirmed at Oxford Farming Conference last week, farmers will receive increased payments for protecting and enhancing nature and delivering sustainable food production.

Farmers could receive up to a further £1,000 per year for taking nature-friendly action through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). This new management payment will be made for the first 50 hectares of farm (£20/ha) in an SFI agreement, to cover the administrative costs of participation and to attract smaller businesses - many of whom are tenant farmers - who are currently under-represented in the scheme.

Farmers with a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement will see an average increase of 10% to their revenue payment rates – covering ongoing activity such as habitat management. Defra is also updating capital payment rates, which cover one-off projects such as hedgerow creation, with an average increase of 48%. We expect there to be 32,000 Countryside Stewardship agreements live at the start of this year, a 94% increase from 2020.

Meanwhile, capital and annual maintenance payments for the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) will also see an increase this year.

We will evolve the existing Countryside Stewardship scheme instead of inventing a new 'Local Nature Recovery' scheme, to get to the same destination of supporting farmers to contribute towards net zero and biodiversity among other outcomes. This will include expanding the scope of the scheme to pay for a wider range of actions at a greater ambition, further improving the service so it's easy for farmers to apply and get paid and targeting our funding through the scheme to where it'll have the biggest impact.

Taken together, these changes will mean we will support farmers and landowners for making space for nature alongside sustainable food production, contributing towards

meeting the UK's legally binding environment targets such as halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030, agreed at COP15 in December last year.

Later this month we'll be publishing detailed information about what we will pay for in our schemes, both this year and in future, and how farmers will be able to get involved.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ BioNTech Strategic Partnership

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):** [\[HCWS485\]](#)

The UK's response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the power of Government collaborating with industry to accelerate life sciences innovation. We want to take this innovative approach to tackling the other major healthcare challenges we face, such as cancer.

The Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Germany-based company BioNTech. This MoU aims to build a strategic partnership which will bring innovative immunotherapy research to the UK, with the potential to transform cancer patient outcomes and develop new vaccines for infectious diseases. This agreement will pave the way for a multi-year partnership between the Government and BioNTech, accelerating trials into the company's ground-breaking pipeline of products targeted at major global diseases such as breast, lung and pancreatic cancer, malaria and tuberculosis.

BioNTech are a biopharmaceutical company developing a pipeline of cutting-edge immunotherapies (including mRNA-based vaccines and therapies). The company became a household name in 2020 after developing a COVID-19 vaccine in partnership with Pfizer, which went on to become the world's first licensed vaccine to use novel mRNA technology.

Through this partnership with BioNTech, Government aims to ensure trials into further promising vaccines and therapies are accelerated, to reach our patients faster. The agreement means cancer patients will get early access to trials exploring personalised mRNA therapies, like cancer vaccines. No two cancers are the same and mRNA vaccines will contain a genetic blueprint to stimulate the immune system to attack cancer cells. The collaboration will aim to deliver 10,000 personalised therapies to UK patients by 2030 through a new research and development hub, creating at least 70 jobs and strengthening the UK's positions as a leader in global life sciences.

BioNTech will also be the first industry partner in the new Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad which is being developed by NHS England and Genomics England. The launch pad will help to rapidly identify large numbers of cancer patients who could be eligible for trials and explore potential vaccine across multiple types of cancer. The partnership will aim to help patients with early and late-stage cancers.

If successfully developed, cancer vaccines could become part of the standard of care.



## ■ Moderna Strategic Partnership

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Barclay):**

[\[HCWS484\]](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of having the ability to develop and deploy vaccines rapidly to respond to a health emergency, as well as to mitigate the potential economic and health costs such an emergency can cause. It also demonstrated the need to establish resilience on UK shores to avoid supply chain disruptions which could have severe public health and economic consequences. While the future trajectory of the COVID-19 virus is uncertain, delivering a consistent and resilient supply of COVID-19 vaccines is critical in ensuring safe and effective vaccines are provided on at least an annual basis over the next decade, to protect those who are most vulnerable to COVID-19.

With these challenges in mind, in June 2022 Ministers signed non-binding Heads of Terms and a single tender case for a strategic partnership between HMG and Moderna. Since then, the Vaccine Taskforce and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), has worked to negotiate a definitive agreement with Moderna. The execution of our contractual agreement for a 10-year partnership with Moderna was announced on 22 December 2022. The partnership will bring vaccine development onto UK shores, boosting our messenger RNA (mRNA) capability, strengthen our ability to scale up production rapidly in the event of a health emergency, and better equip the UK to respond to COVID-19 and future health emergencies.

Through this deal, Moderna will, at its own cost, establish a UK based manufacturing facility and Global Research and Development (R&D) Centre, as well as commit substantial investment into UK-based R&D activities over the 10-year period, bringing the UK a step closer to becoming the leading global hub for life sciences. The manufacturing facility will be capable of supplying up to 100m doses of respiratory vaccine per year in normal circumstances, increasing to up to 250m doses in the event of a health emergency. The UK will have priority access to these vaccines where they are demonstrated to be safe, effective, and authorised by the MHRA. These include both Moderna's proven and highly effective COVID-19 vaccine and others in its pipeline, including against flu and RSV, providing health resilience.

Moderna has demonstrated expertise in mRNA development which has the potential to be a transformative breakthrough technology in several disease areas, including cancer, respiratory illnesses and heart disease. mRNA vaccines also have the potential to treat multiple pathogens in a single shot and be delivered in rapid timeframes.

The new Innovation and Technology Research Centre will look to unlock this potential by developing revolutionary treatments in the UK, which will benefit NHS patients and people worldwide. This will include running a significant number of clinical trials in the UK. Moderna has also pledged to fund grants for UK universities, including PhD places, research programmes and wider vaccine ecosystem engagement. The industry-leading, future-proof design of the plant will permit the addition of capability to manufacture a wide range of medicines and will be a massive boost to the UK's R&D capability, as well as creating more than 150 highly skilled jobs

The partnership, secured by the Vaccine Taskforce, will be taken forward by the Covid Vaccines Unit in the UKHSA. This will see the UKHSA working with Moderna to ensure early vaccine development, supporting the G7 mission to get from variant to vaccine in 100 days. Construction is expected to commence in early 2023, with the first mRNA vaccine expected to be produced in the UK in 2025.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Late Night Levy: a consultation on the charge to be applicable to late night refreshment premises

**The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp):** [\[HCWS479\]](#)

The late night levy (the 'levy') is a discretionary power enabling licensing authorities in England and Wales to collect a financial contribution from premises that profit from the sale of alcohol late at night (between 12am and 6am).

Section 142 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced several changes to the late night levy, which are yet to be commenced. Once in force, these changes will give licensing authorities the power to charge late night refreshment (LNR) premises the levy to assist with the cost of policing the NTE, give PCCs the right to request that a licensing authority formally propose a levy and require licensing authorities to publish information about how the revenue raised from the levy is spent.

LNR premises will only be charged the late night levy in areas where licensing authorities decide that they place demands on police resources in the NTE. In each area, licensing authorities will have the option of charging only premises licensed to sell alcohol, or to premises licensed to sell alcohol and premises licensed to sell late night refreshment. The consultation asks whether LNR premises should be charged the same rate as other venues included in a levy, or whether they should receive a 30% discount.

The Government recognises that businesses operating in the night time economy have faced particularly challenging times over the course of the pandemic. However, we believe the time is right to finally commence the changes made to the levy in 2017 which have been considerably delayed. The requirements for a local authority to consult widely before taking a final decision on the introduction of the levy locally provides sufficient safeguards to protect businesses and use the power effectively.

The consultation is aimed at late night refreshment providers, local licensing authorities, the police, licensed premises, members of the public and other interested parties in England and Wales, where these proposals apply. The consultation being launched today will run for 12 weeks.

A copy of this consultation will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on GOV.UK.



## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ India Trade Negotiations: Update

**Secretary of State for International Trade (Kemi Badenoch):** [\[HCWS478\]](#)

The sixth round of UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations began on 12 December and concluded on 16 December. As with previous rounds, this was conducted in a hybrid fashion - UK officials travelled to New Delhi for negotiations and others attended virtually.

Technical discussions were held across 11 policy areas over 28 separate sessions. They included detailed draft treaty text discussions in these chapters.

Coinciding with the start of the round, on 12-13 December I also visited New Delhi to meet my counterpart, Minister Piyush Goyal. We discussed the negotiations and the wider UK and India trade relationship. Discussions covered our respective ambitions for the deal, and we welcomed the progress made so far. I also made clear on our red lines in the negotiation. I was also clear that in this negotiation, as with all our FTA negotiations, the NHS and the services it provides is not on the table.

I also met a number of UK and Indian businesses. I heard first-hand about the significant opportunities that an ambitious FTA could bring as well as the challenges that some businesses currently face and how governments can help break down barriers to trade and investment.

Both sides are working toward a balanced deal which will strengthen our economic links and bring real benefits to UK businesses, families and consumers.

The seventh round of official-level negotiations is due to take place in early 2023.

The Government will continue to keep Parliament updated as these negotiations progress.

## PRIME MINISTER

### ■ Appointment of the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests

**Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):** [\[HCWS480\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that, on 22 December 2022, I appointed Sir Laurie Magnus CBE to the role of Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests. The office of Independent Adviser has existed since 2006 and performs a critically important role, rooted in the Ministerial Code, as a source of trusted, impartial advice to the Prime Minister on the proper management of Ministers' private interests and on adherence to the Code itself.

Sir Laurie has been appointed for a non-renewable five year term and will discharge the role under existing published Terms of Reference.

I am confident that Sir Laurie not only demonstrates the necessary qualities but will serve in the role with distinction, in the best traditions of public service.

A copy of my exchange of letters with Sir Laurie, together with the Terms of Reference, have been placed in the Library of the House.

I am also placing in the Library a copy of the Ministerial Code, which was re-issued on the same day. As before, the Ministerial Code sets out my expectations for the way in which Ministers should conduct themselves. As I set out in the foreword to that document, the Government will work day and night to deliver for the British people. And as we go about our tasks, we will uphold the Principles of Public Life, ensuring integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ International Travel Update

**Minister of State for Transport (Jesse Norman):**

[\[HCWS481\]](#)

The Government has taken action, under powers within the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984, to limit the risk of COVID-19 infections from travellers originating from China. The Government has announced these precautionary and temporary measures to improve the UK's ability to detect potential new variants of COVID-19 from China, following an increase in cases there and the easing of their border measures from 8 January.

The decision has been taken due to a lack of comprehensive health information shared by China. The situation remains under review and if there are improvements in information sharing and greater transparency then the temporary measures will be amended. On 30 December 2022, the Government announced that it would require people flying directly or indirectly from mainland China to England to provide proof of a negative pre-departure test, taken within 2 days of departure. This came into effect as of 04:00 on Thursday 5 January 2023. This applies to transiting passengers, as well as those whose final destination is England.

In addition, we announced that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will launch surveillance which will see a sample of passengers from China, arriving at Heathrow airport only, undertaking PCR tests for COVID-19 on a voluntary basis. UKHSA activated this process on Sunday 8 January in readiness for the first flights arriving later this week. All positive samples will be sent for sequencing to enhance existing measures to monitor for new variants.

The UK joins a growing list of countries across the world including the US, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Malaysia and India in announcing measures designed to help to detect and assess any new COVID-19 variants. Whilst public health is a devolved matter and these measures currently apply only in England, the Government continues to work closely with the devolved administrations

The Government recognises the impact that these temporary health measures may have on businesses and passengers. The situation remains under constant review and the UK is working with industry and closely monitoring the situation on the mainland while encouraging China to provide greater transparency on their COVID data.

## ■ Transport Update

**Minister of State for Transport (Huw Merriman):**

**[\[HCWS477\]](#)**

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This Statement concerns the application made under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed development by National Highways of the A47 Wansford to Sutton.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the A47 Wansford to Sutton Development Consent Order application on 11 October 2022 and the current deadline is 11 January 2023.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 17 February 2023 to allow for further consultation on a number of outstanding issues and to allow sufficient time for the analysis of responses to the consultation.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.