



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 11 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:45 P.M., 11 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

■ Disability: Energy

Ian Blackford:

[105429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide additional support to those disabled people who are disproportionately affected by higher energy prices due to a requirement for high energy usage due to their health conditions.

Graham Stuart:

To support the public with their energy bills, the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) is delivering a £400 non-repayable government grant. The Energy Price Guarantee will save a typical household in Great Britain £900 this Winter. People with disabilities are also entitled to one-off £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment. The Government is currently reviewing the Energy Price Guarantee. This consultation will explore the best ways to ensure that vulnerable high energy users, such as those with medical requirements, are not put at risk.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Charities

Patricia Gibson:

[117657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of extending the Energy Bill Relief Scheme for charities.

Graham Stuart:

Over the course of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme review, the Government has held discussions cross-Whitehall, as well as with businesses and trade associations, to understand those most in need of support. Charities will receive support for their energy bills. There is also wider support to help them with costs including a reduction in VAT, from 20% to 5%, and exclusion from the main rates of the Climate Change Levy on some of the energy they use.

Final outcomes of the EBRs review can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bill-relief-scheme-non-standard-cases/energy-bill-relief-scheme-non-standard-cases-guidance-for-non-domestic-customers>.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Alex Norris:

[114847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his department has made an assessment of the potential merits of amending the Energy Bills

Support Scheme to allow prepayment meter customers to receive the discount on their gas account instead of their electricity account.

Graham Stuart:

Transferring Energy Bills Support Scheme payments from electricity meters to gas meters is allowed under the scheme if the customer is with the same provider. This is administered by energy suppliers and the Government encourages suppliers to offer their customers as much flexibility as possible.

■ **Energy: Debt Collection**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[117699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of households that have been visited by (a) debt collectors and (b) bailiffs due to the non-payment of energy bills in the last 12 months; and whether his Department is taking steps to monitor trends in this data.

Graham Stuart:

The Government and the independent regulator, Ofgem, do not collect data about actions on individual customer accounts. The Government introduced the 'Breathing Space' scheme which aims to address consumers' ability to tackle debt and offers legal protections from creditors for 60 days. Under Ofgem rules, energy companies must set appropriate repayment plans based on a customer's ability to pay, for those at risk of or in debt.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[117700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to prevent debt collectors and bailiffs from making demands on people who are (a) behind with their energy payments and (b) in fuel poverty.

Graham Stuart:

The Government introduced the 'Breathing Space' scheme which aims to address consumers' ability to tackle debt and offers legal protections from creditors for 60 days. Under Ofgem rules, energy companies must set appropriate repayment plans based on a customer's ability to pay, for those at risk of or in debt.

■ **Energy: Meters**

Dan Carden:

[\[117702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussion he has had with Ofgem about the potential merits of a ban on the forcible installation of prepayment meters this winter.

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, and only where it is safe to do so.

Circumstances under which it is deemed not safe to have a prepayment meter include specific disabilities or illnesses, or having children under five.

If prepayment meters were not used in the market, court enforcement would be the only recourse for suppliers in cases of non-payment and large debt.

■ Energy: Prices

Seema Malhotra:

[\[109579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of additional costs incurred by households with disabled children due to rising energy prices.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is delivering the Energy Bills Support Scheme, a £400 non-repayable grant to support all families with their energy bills. In addition, families with disabled children are also entitled to a one-off £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment. The Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) will save a typical household in Great Britain £900 this Winter. The Government is currently reviewing the EPG. This consultation will explore the best ways to ensure that vulnerable high energy users, such as those with medical requirements, are not put at risk of having to pay more.

■ Trading Standards: Finance

Sarah Olney:

[\[117772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been provided to Trading Standards (a) nationally and (b) by local authority in each of the last five years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales are responsible for funding Local Authority Trading Standards Services (LATSS). Local authorities are independent from central government and are responsible for determining their resourcing priorities in accordance with the needs of the local electorate. Local government expenditure is determined by the block grant to local authorities, with the remainder raised from local taxation. This funding is used to resource LATSS.

The Department established National Trading Standards (NTS) in England and Wales, to better enable local authorities to take coordinated action against consumer scams. Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) was created to provide a similar role in Scotland. The resources are supplementary and distinct from LATSS funding. Funding in each of the last five years is provided below.

	NTS AND TSS
22/23	£13,242,000
21/22	£13,242,000

	NTS AND TSS
20/21	£13,235,800
19/20	£14,440,000
18/19	£14,676,000
Total	£68,835,800

■ UK Trade with EU: Small Businesses

Hywel Williams:

[\[117483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) support and (b) advice the Government provides to small businesses facing higher costs when importing from the EU as a result of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has provided extensive support to help businesses including guidance products, webinars, and 'how to' videos. Through the SME Brexit Support Fund and the Intermediaries Grant, the Government made over £100m available to help businesses adapt to new rules.

The Government has produced a useful step-by-step guide to help businesses understand the process for importing goods into the UK. The Government also created a customs intermediary register on GOV.UK to help businesses to find intermediary assistance appropriate to their needs. The Customs & International Trade helpline and webchat facility is also available to help businesses with customs queries.

■ Wines: Industry

Tim Loughton:

[\[117409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will bring forward legislative proposals to allow English Sparkling Wine to be sold in pint and half litre bottles.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The quantities in which pre-packed alcohol, including English sparkling wine, can be sold will be considered as part of the Government's review of EU-derived law. Further details will be provided in due course.

CABINET OFFICE**Blood: Contamination****Taiwo Owatemi:**[\[117872\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to recommendation 16 of the Compensation and redress for the victims of infected blood: recommendations for a framework report, published on 7 June 2022. when the Government will establish an arms-length body to administer compensation to people affected by the infected blood scandal.

Jeremy Quin:

I made a statement in the House on 15 December, providing an update on the Government's preparations for the conclusion of the Infected Blood Inquiry, due to report later this year - including our work in response to the Compensation Framework Study.

A cross government working group coordinated by the Cabinet Office is taking forward work informed by the Study's recommendations, including the establishment of an arm's length body.

We will continue to update the House on progress on the Government's response to the Study's recommendations.

Disability and Unemployed People**Rachael Maskell:**[\[117696\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answers of 13 December 2022 to Question 102902 on Unemployment: Energy and Question 102903 on Social Security Benefits: Disability, how many (a) disabled people were in receipt of disability benefits and (b) unemployed people were on pre-payment meters in the first six months of the 2022-23 financial year.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 6 January is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response [\[UKSA Response to PQ117696.pdf\]](#)

Electronic Government**Mark Pritchard:**[\[117535\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that people without access to online and mobile banking can make payments for services provided by Government (a) Departments and (b) agencies.

Jeremy Quin:

Government has committed to ensuring that assistance is always available for those who need it. All Government departments and agencies are required to be compliant with HMG's 'Service Standard' available at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard>. Specifically, point 5 of the Service Standard requires that government services are accessible to all users, including disabled people, people with other legally protected characteristics, people who do not have access to the internet and those who lack the skills or confidence to use the internet. This includes being accessible to those without a mobile device. Compliance to this standard is measured through regular Service Assessments.

In addition, the Government Digital Service in the Cabinet Office runs GOV.UK Pay - a free service available to public sector organisations, enabling them to take card payments. The service includes a mail order and over the phone payment option.

■ Government Departments: Telephone Services**Sarah Olney:****[113291]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has made a recent estimate of the average waiting time for calls made to helplines run by Government departments; and if he will take steps to help shorten those waiting times.

Sarah Olney:**[113292]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has set target response times for telephone calls to Government Department helplines.

Alex Burghart:

Departmental helplines are not managed or run centrally. Therefore, each department is responsible for their own helpline, as well as response and waiting times.

DEFENCE**■ Annington Homes****John Healey:****[114527]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what proportion of appointments Regional Accommodation Maintenance Services contractors kept in each quarter since the contract began.

Alex Chalk:

Amey and VIVO currently record their appointments data differently but will seek to align how they report later in January 2023. Whilst I am unable to answer the specific question asked, I can provide general appointments data by month for VIVO only, as outlined in the table below from the start of the contract in April 2022.

MONTH	NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS	NUMBER OF KEPT APPOINTMENTS	PERCENTAGE OF KEPT APPOINTMENTS
April	19,924	19,863	99.7%
May	16,291	16,223	99.6%
June	12,806	10,163	79.4%
July	19,708	19,425	98.6%
August	19,468	19,295	99.1%
September	19,526	19,354	99.1%
October	21,282	21,016	98.8%
November	25,877	25,509	98.6%
TOTAL	154,882	150,848	97.4%

■ Armed Forces

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[117547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish Land Forces Standing Order 3208.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Land Forces Standing Order 3208 was superseded by Army General Administrative Instruction (AGAI) 57, which was last updated in October 2022. This AGAI is an internal document intended for Army personnel which outlines best practices on how to manage Service personnel and as such would not be made routinely available. However, I will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

John Healey:

[\[113205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many fines for poor performance his Department issued to contractors providing services related to the maintenance and management of (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation in each year since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

This information is not held as the department does not issue fines to contractors for poor performance. Sums may instead be withheld dependent on performance from contractual payments. This is the same for both Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and Single Living Accommodation (SLA).

Under the previous National Housing Prime Contract for SFA monthly deductions were made for performance failures for the whole period of the contract.

The new Future Defence Infrastructure Services Accommodation contracts which came into place on the 1 April 2022 are just entering the first period where sums can be withheld for any performance failures. Deductions will be assessed and applied quarterly in arrears, starting with the quarter ending December 2022.

Details on any money withheld for performance failures in SLA can only be provided at disproportionate cost as these are part of a wider estate maintenance contract.

John Healey:

[114533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December to Question 111517 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many calls related to (a) damp and (b) mould in Forces accommodation were received in each year since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

The National Service Centre came into service in April 2022 and since that date has taken 2,684 calls relating to damp and mould issues. The information requested prior to April 2022 is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Defence has a robust damp and mould management policy for Service Family Accommodation, and from the start of the Future Defence Infrastructure Services contract in April 2022 a dedicated hotline has been in operation for the reporting of damp and mould. No properties with reported issues should be allocated.

Should damp and mould emerge during occupancy, we have set up a dedicated hotline for families to make a report. Reports are now investigated by a professional surveyor and, where appropriate families should be offered alternative accommodation.

We are investing £73 million in improved thermal efficiency this Financial Year on top of £25 million per annum over the last three years, to further reduce occurrence of damp and mould.

■ Chinook Helicopters

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[114661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the contribution of the Chinook force for the wider capability of our Armed Forces; and what his plans are for the number of Chinook platforms.

Alex Chalk:

The Chinook Force provides the UK Armed Forces with vital rotary wing heavy lift capability and supports a range of users and Defence outputs, from crisis response through to war fighting.

Regarding the number of Chinook platforms, I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Norwich South (Mr Clive Lewis MP) on 11 November 2022 to Question 80797.

Attachments:

1. Chinook Helicopters [[UIN 80797.docx](#)]

■ **Ministry of Defence: Travel**

Emily Thornberry:

[[114576](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October to Question 59548 on Ministry of Defence: Travel, how much of the net expenditure of (a) £91,607,334 in Calendar year 2021 and (b) £66,899,128 from January to May 2022 derived from spending on transactions below £500.

Alex Chalk:

Spending on transactions below £500 from the cited expenditures are as follows:

Jan – Dec 2021 - £33,765.98

Jan – May 2022 £25,497.35

■ **Turkey: Armed Forces**

Kenny MacAskill:

[[117809](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2022 to Question 108450 on Turkey: Armed Forces, whether the 51 troops include troops serving with NATO.

James Heappey:

Of the 51 troops the Republic of Turkey has stationed in the UK, 44 are serving with NATO, four as part of the Turkish Embassy Military Section, one within United Kingdom Strike Force and two in the Empire Test Pilots' School.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Swimming: Children**

Rachael Maskell:

[[117688](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps she has taken with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure that all children of (a) primary and (b) secondary school age receive tuition in (i) swimming, (ii) swimming life-saving skills and (iii) water safety.

Stuart Andrew:

Swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy. Swimming and water safety are also vital life skills.

The Department for Education is responsible for the national curriculum that sets out that all primary schools must provide swimming instruction. All primary schools in

England receive PE and sport premium funding, which can be used to purchase support from organisations who can assist schools in overcoming barriers to the delivery of school swimming and water safety.

Last academic year, the Department for Education's programme to support schools to open their facilities enabled 101 schools to reopen their pools or extend the amount of swimming offered to pupils. Phase three of the Opening School Facilities programme will look to support schools with pools to maximise their usage.

New water safety resources have been made available to schools by the National Water Safety Forum, supporting teachers to deliver water safety in a classroom environment.

Alongside this Sport England has invested £12,775,274 in swimming and diving projects since April 2019, which includes £9,360,002 to Swim England.

EDUCATION

■ Children in Care: Missing Persons

Helen Hayes: [\[114713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's data release Children looked after in England including adoptions, how many of the children missing or away from placement without authorisation for more than two days were missing for (a) more than one week, (b) more than one month and (c) remain missing.

Helen Hayes: [\[114720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's data release Children looked after in England including adoptions, if she will provide a breakdown by age of children missing or away from a placement without authorisation.

Claire Coutinho:

The department takes the matter of any child going missing very seriously. Statutory guidance is in place detailing the responsibilities of local authorities, working with partners, to prevent children going missing and to gather and share information and intelligence to reduce this risk. The guidance applies to all children going missing, whether this is from the family home or from care: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>.

Figures on the age and duration of incidents away from placement without authorisation are published at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/26906980-a16c-4e8f-7453-08dac3115297>. Figures on the age and duration of missing incidents are published at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/fast-track/c7ead7a2-5660-4192-7732-08dab100bfc2>

The department publishes age and durations by the number of incidents rather than by the number of children. This is because a child may have multiple missing incidents.

The tables also include the number of children who are missing or away without authorisation at 31 March.

■ Department for Education: Energy

Bridget Phillipson:

[113233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of the energy used by (a) her Department, (b) Ofsted and (c) Ofqual came from (i) renewable and (ii) non-renewable energy sources in the last 12 months for which data is available.

Nick Gibb:

The Government Property Agency (GPA) manages the Department's and Ofqual's office assets on its behalf. Ofsted manages its own assets, including the management of its utilities and associated energy sources.

The data for the Department for the 2021/22 financial year is included in the Department's annual report and accounts, available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1125417/DfE consolidated annual report and accounts 2021 to 2022_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1125417/DfE_consolidated_annual_report_and_accounts_2021_to_2022_accessible.pdf).

Ofqual has one office within a shared building. The volume of energy used cannot be extrapolated from the building data.

The data for Ofsted for the 2021/22 financial year is included in its annual report and accounts, accessible at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090199/31252 Ofsted Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22 Print .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090199/31252_Ofsted_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2021-22_Print_.pdf).

During the 2021/22 financial year, all electricity accounts under GPA or Ofsted's name transferred to a renewable for business energy tariff, meaning that the electricity was 100% renewable.

In some Departmental and Ofsted offices, the landlord incorporates utility bills into the rent, meaning that information on the volume of energy used and whether it is renewable is not fully known.

■ Department for Education: Parking

Bridget Phillipson:

[113230]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 22 April 2022 to Question 151074 on Department for Education: Parking, if she will take steps to update and publish the data relating to her Department and arm's length bodies in that table.

Nick Gibb:

The table below includes data to support the response relating to the Department for Education and arm's length bodies.

SITE	NUMBER OF SPACES AVAILABLE TO STAFF FREE OF CHARGE	NUMBER OF SPACES AVAILABLE TO STAFF AT A CHARGE	REVENUE RAISED THROUGH CHARGING STAFF FOR SPACES
Department for Education	463 (across 12 sites)	None	N/A
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	60	140	Nil
Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)	38 (across 5 sites)	None	N/A
Office of the Children's Commissioner	None	None	N/A
Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education	8	None	N/A
Engineering Construction Industry Training Board	1	None	N/A
Construction Industry Training Board	490 (across 3 sites)	None	N/A
Student Loans Company	316 (across 4 sites)	None	N/A
LocatED Property Limited	None	None	N/A
Office for Students	111 in Bristol	None	N/A
Social Work England	3	None	N/A

■ **Department for Education: Training**

Bridget Phillipson:[\[113236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many staff at (a) her Department, (b) Ofsted and (c) Ofqual have (i) PRINCE2 certification, (ii) another project management

certification and (iii) no certified project management training; and how many staff this is as a proportion of total headcount in each organisation.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally for staff at the Department.

Ofsted data is a matter for His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Ofqual data is a matter for its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Education: Trade Unions

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[114708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will meet with representatives of education sector trade unions before the Budget on 15 March.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[114710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will hold discussions with head teachers on the financial needs of schools before the Budget on 15 March.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[114712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will hold discussions with higher education representatives on the financial needs of universities before the Budget on 15 March.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[114714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will hold discussions with representatives of further education colleges on the financial needs of those bodies before the Budget on 15 March.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[114715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will hold discussions with representatives of childcare and early years providers on the financial needs of that sector before the Budget on 15 March.

Nick Gibb:

Department officials and Ministers continue to meet regularly with education and childcare sector leaders, unions and other representative bodies to discuss a wide range of early years, school, further education and higher education policy issues.

■ Free School Meals

Munira Wilson:

[\[117901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2022 to Question 98899 on Free School Meals, what estimate she has made of the proportion

of children in each region of England who are entitled to free school meals but have not applied for them.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has previously conducted research into the proportion of children who are entitled to free school meals but do not claim them. The research can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupils-not-claiming-free-school-meals-2013>. This estimate contains breakdowns by Local Authority.

■ **Further Education: Infrastructure**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[117559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many further education college infrastructure projects are affected by the reclassification of colleges.

Robert Halfon:

Following the decision by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to reclassify colleges to the public sector, we are supporting colleges to meet the requirements of managing public money, while retaining many of their key areas of autonomy and flexibility. Managing public money means public sector organisations may only borrow from private sector sources if the transaction delivers value for money for His Majesty's Treasury. The department has put in place a consents process for any new commercial borrowing that colleges would like to undertake. We have already responded to six colleges which had urgent requests for commercial borrowing in December. The department has received 63 consent requests, of which 36 have capital projects as part of the request, from 24 colleges. Department officials are working through the requests for January in priority order and we will respond to colleges as quickly as possible.

In response to the ONS decision on reclassification, the department has designed a package of measures to enable colleges to deliver on the priorities in the Skills for Jobs White Paper and continue to invest in their estates. This includes an additional £150 million allocation of capital grant funding for condition improvement for 2023/4. These allocations are published on GOV.UK under Further Education reclassification capital allocation, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fe-capital-funding#fe-reclassification-capital-allocation>.

The overall skills capital investment in this spending review period is £2.8 billion over the 3 years.

■ **Mathematics: Teachers**

Munira Wilson:

[117905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the speech made by the Prime Minister on 4 January 2023, what estimate she has made of the number of additional maths teachers required to enable all children to study mathematics until the age of 18.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has set out a new mission to ensure all pupils study some form of mathematics until they are 18 and leave school better equipped for the jobs of the future.

The Department does not envisage making a mathematics A level compulsory for all 16 year olds. The Department is exploring a range of options, including existing routes, such as the Core Mathematics qualifications, T Levels, as well as other options. Further detail will be set out in due course. Workforce impacts in schools and further education colleges will be considered as part of this work.

The Department has significant recruitment and retention investments in place for maths teachers. The Department provides a £27,000 tax free bursary or £29,000 tax free scholarship for maths Initial Teacher Training trainees starting in 2023/24, and a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 tax free, annually, for teachers in their first five years working in disadvantaged schools.

Maths teachers will also benefit from the Department's pay offer. The Department has accepted the 2022/23 recommendations of the independent School Teachers' Review Body and is awarding teachers the highest pay awards in a generation. These awards mean up to 8.9% for new teachers and a 5% award for experienced teachers and leaders. This brings starting salaries to £28,000 outside London and keeps the Department on track to meet the manifesto commitment of a £30,000 starting salary.

Schools: Buildings**Bridget Phillipson:****[114756]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the table of key risks contained at page 103 of the Department for Education's Annual Report published on 19 December 2022, whether the risks that school buildings with elements at condition grade D are greater when temperatures are below zero.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's Condition Data Collection (CDC) grades individual building elements between A and D. These surveys are visual inspections only, and do not assess the overall structural integrity of a building. The grading of an individual element should not therefore be directly linked to the overall structural integrity of a building or the effect of extreme weather conditions.

School owners are responsible for providing a safe environment for their pupils. Where they have significant concerns about the integrity of their buildings, they should contact officials using existing reporting mechanisms.

The Department's Good Estate Management for Schools sets out advice, standards, and tools to support effective estate management, and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools>.

The Department prioritises capital support where there is a risk to health and safety. Over £13 billion has been allocated since 2015 to maintain and improve school facilities across England, including £1.8 billion in 2022/23. The Department is transforming the environment at 500 schools and sixth form colleges over the next decade. In December 2022, the Department announced 239 more schools to be rebuilt or refurbished, taking the total to 400 of the 500 projects already planned.

■ Schools: Construction

Matt Western:

[113316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an estimate of the average cost of building a new school.

Nick Gibb:

The Department funds the provision of new school buildings through the Free Schools Programme, the School Rebuilding Programme, and the Priority School Building Programme.

There are several types of school, primary, secondary, all-through, 16-19, alternative provision and special. They range from small village primaries to large urban secondaries, and operate from a wide variety of sites. As such, forecasted costs and scope for each school building project varies greatly and is only known once a feasibility study has been completed and following the awarding of contracts. The Department publishes details of all contracts awarded over £10,000 to the Contracts Finder, which is available at: <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

■ Sixth Form Colleges: Energy

Mr Toby Perkins:

[117561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help support sixth-form colleges with rises in the cost of energy.

Robert Halfon:

The Department is keeping under review the potential impacts of the rising cost of energy on providers across the department's remit.

Colleges are autonomous institutions responsible for their own financial sustainability and are taking actions to respond to inflationary pressures, for example through reducing energy consumption.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has outlined the range of support on energy cost increases that will be available for businesses, the public sector and households. As part of that, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including colleges, are protected from excessively high energy bills over this winter. Discounts will be applied to energy usage initially between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Schools and colleges in England will also be allocated a share of £500 million in capital funding in the 2022/23 financial year to spend on energy efficiency upgrades. This comprises £447 million for schools and sixth form colleges and £53 million for further education colleges.

This funding will not only help schools and colleges save money, but it will also make them more energy efficient during the cold period and increase winter resilience for future years. Allocations were published on 6 December 2022 to help colleges plan and payments are expected to be made in January 2023.

The department assesses and reviews colleges' financial health on a regular basis and uses this information to determine where support and intervention from the department, the Education Skills and Funding Agency and Further Education Commissioner can help colleges to improve their position. Further information can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-oversight-support-and-intervention>.

■ Sixth Form Colleges: Inflation

Mr Toby Perkins:

[117562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help support sixth-form colleges with costs associated with increases in the level of inflation.

Robert Halfon:

The department is keeping under review the potential impacts of the rising cost of energy on providers across the department's remit.

Colleges are autonomous institutions responsible for their own financial sustainability and are taking actions to respond to inflationary pressures, for example through reducing energy consumption.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has outlined the range of support on energy cost increases that will be available for businesses, the public sector and households. As part of that, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including colleges, are protected from excessively high energy bills over this winter. Discounts will be applied to energy usage initially between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

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■ **Special Educational Needs: Birmingham Selly Oak**

Steve McCabe:

[117431]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the level of demand for school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency.

Claire Coutinho:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, including places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), sits with local authorities.

To support local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties, the department is investing £2.6 billion between 2022 and 2025 to help deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision. This represents a significant 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 we announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations amounting to over £1.4 billion of new investment, focused on academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25. Birmingham received a total of just under £27.3 million through the allocations announced in March 2022. Birmingham also received over £6.5 million through previous allocations announced in April 2021, to deliver new places for academic year 2022/23.

From Summer 2023 the department will be collecting data from local authorities on the physical capacity of special schools and SEND provision in mainstream schools, as well as corresponding forecasts of demand for specialist places. We expect this to be an annual data collection, forming part of the existing School Capacity Survey.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Public Consultation**

Helen Hayes:

[117727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish the responses it received to the public consultation on the SEND and AP Provision Green Paper.

Claire Coutinho:

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper consultation closed on 22 July 2022. The department is currently reviewing the feedback, and using this, along with continued engagement with the

system, to inform the next stage of delivering improvements for children, young people and their families.

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

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

■ Vocational Education

Nadia Whittome:

[113408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to improve access to vocational courses.

Robert Halfon:

The department is reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high quality technical options that support progression and meet employer needs, including the introduction of T Levels. Streamlining the system will mean that it is simpler and more straight forward, and therefore more accessible, for students to make choices about the qualifications they choose and their future progression routes. These reforms will ensure that all remaining level 3 qualifications in scope of the review, including those which don't overlap with T Levels, are high-quality, necessary, have a clear purpose and support progression to positive

T Levels are substantial, rigorous, and focused on high-quality learning, and include a substantial industry placement element of around 9 weeks. They will provide the knowledge and experience needed for skilled employment, further study (including higher education) or a higher apprenticeship. T Level content has been designed with employers to ensure that the qualifications meet the needs of industry and to give students a head-start in their chosen career.

We are also delivering supply and demand side reforms to reverse the decline in uptake of high-quality higher technical education.

Central to these reforms is the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). These are current, and new, level 4-5 qualifications, approved and quality marked by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE) as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers.

HTQ rollout is on track. They began teaching from this September, starting with Digital HTQs, and all 15 occupational routes are due to be rolled out by 2025, where relevant occupational standards are available. To date 106 qualifications have been approved as HTQs across Digital, Construction, and Health & Science routes, for teaching this year or next. There are over 70 providers able to deliver HTQs from September 2022, with the majority being Further Education Colleges.

To support HTQs and make them more widely available and accessible we've announced circa £70m to date in funding to prime higher technical provision in

Further Education & Higher Education Institutions across the country. We've also introduced an HTQ brand, are taking steps to improve communications, advice, and guidance, and are putting the student finance offer for HTQs on a par with degrees from academic year 2023/24, including access to maintenance loans for those studying part-time.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Females

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[117963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help reverse the Taliban's ban on (a) female aid workers and (b) women attending universities in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

The Government is working with the UN, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other donor governments to understand the impact of the ban on Afghan women working for NGOs, ensure a coordinated and robust international response and make sure that life-saving humanitarian assistance continues where possible. The Government has repeatedly condemned the Taliban's decisions to restrict women and girls' access to education, including through UN Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions and public statements, most recently on 29 December 2022. Our Mission to Afghanistan in Doha continues to lobby the Taliban to reverse both bans.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[117403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of the places available in the first year under ACRS Pathway 3 have been filled, pending security checks, by eligible (a) British Council (i) contractors and (ii) contractors' family members, (b) GardaWorld (i) contractors and (ii) contractors' family members and (c) Chevening (i) Alumni and (ii) Alumni family members.

Leo Docherty:

The Government received over 11,400 expressions of interest (EOI) under Pathway 3 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which we have been assessing against the eligibility criteria. We have informed just under 200 individuals that they are eligible in principle for resettlement, subject to passing security checks. Including their dependents, this accounts for over 750 of the 1500 available places on Pathway 3 in year one. We will not be commenting on individual cohort numbers while EOIs are still being processed and security checks are outstanding. As initial security checks are completed, we are providing further information on next steps to eligible individuals. We will update Parliament further once we have completed the

allocation process, have notified all those who submitted EOIs of the outcome and have assured data to share.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Undocumented Migrants**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[114535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on illegal migration to the British Overseas Territories.

David Rutley:

Responsibility for migration in the British Overseas Territories lies with the elected Overseas Territory Government's. As such, information on illegal migration will be held by Overseas Territory Governments. The Territories face varying levels of migration issues, and the UK Government is providing support where needed.

■ **Cuba: USA**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[117476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of migration of people from Cuba to the US in 2022.

Leo Docherty:

We are aware that increasing numbers of Cuban nationals are migrating from Cuba to countries in the region, including to the US. The UK opposes the US embargo against Cuba, which continues to damage Cuba's economy. We consistently vote in support of the annual United Nations General Assembly Resolution calling for an end to the embargo.

Many Cuban migrants travel through Mexico to reach the US. Our Embassy in Mexico City monitors the cross-border migration situation closely. British Embassy officials visit migration shelters on Mexico's southern and northern borders and remain in close contact with Mexican authorities.

■ **EU Countries: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

Siobhan Baillie:

[\[113455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has with his counterparts in the European Union on the impact of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on peace and security in Europe.

Leo Docherty:

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) poses a persistent threat to the peace and security of Europe. There have been at least 10 threats by Iran to kidnap or assassinate British or UK-based people this year. The recent transfers of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to Russia for use in Ukraine is yet another facet of Iran's destabilising behaviour. The UK has sanctioned over 300 Iranian individuals and entities for their role in weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, and

terrorism, including the IRGC in its entirety. The Foreign Secretary raises this regularly with his European partners.

■ Food Supply

Hywel Williams:

[\[117482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential impact of (a) 2022 supply constraints and (b) fertiliser costs on global food security in 2023; and what steps he is taking to improve global food security.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

FCDO is monitoring food security. Global food production will be constrained, including by high fertiliser prices. Whilst there will be no absolute risk to food availability, we expect hotspots of reduced availability and increased levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. The challenge will be possibly unprecedented numbers of people not able to afford or access the food that they need to survive and live a healthy and productive life.

FCDO is addressing underlying causes; promoting robust food systems in low-income countries; saving lives in famine risk areas; and ensuring an effective international response, including through a focus on the most vulnerable.

■ Human Trafficking: English Channel

Mr David Davis:

[\[117460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he holds any information on how many people traffickers operating in the English Channel the French authorities have (a) arrested and (b) charged in each of the last five years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is not the owner of this information and we are therefore unable to provide the requested details. However, if the French Government publishes these figures we will update the Rt. Hon David Davis MP separately.

■ Iran: Demonstrations

Dan Jarvis:

[\[113253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of the continued (a) use of violence and (b) persecution by the Iranian Government towards (i) women protesters and (ii) their supporters.

David Rutley:

The repeated violations of basic human rights committed by the Iranian regime against its own citizens is abhorrent. Working with our international partners, the UK

secured the removal of Iran from the UN Commission on the Support of Women on 14 December, and the establishment of a UN investigation into the regime's response to protests at the Human Rights Council on 24 November. On 9 December, the UK implemented a third round of human rights sanctions against individuals involved in the suppression of protests, bringing the total to over 40 individuals and one entity since the protests began. We will continue to urge Iran to improve its human rights record at all appropriate opportunities, including on women and girls, and to work with international partners to ensure accountability.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[113254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart about the imposition of the death penalty on protestors in Iran.

David Rutley:

The use of the death penalty against protestors standing up for their basic human rights is morally abhorrent. The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances. On 20 December Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke to Iran's most senior diplomat to protest against Iran's continued use of the death penalty. On 8 December, the Foreign Secretary released a statement demanding that Iran halt all executions and end the violence against its own people. On 9 December we sanctioned 10 Iranian officials connected to Iran's judicial and prison systems, including six individuals linked to the Revolutionary Courts that have been responsible for prosecuting protestors with egregious sentences including the death penalty.

■ Iran: Hezbollah

Karen Bradley:

[\[113264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of Iran's financial support for Hezbollah.

David Rutley:

The Government regularly assesses the impact of Iran's destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions, with consequences for the international community. It is for this reason that we currently have over 300 sanctions in place against Iran, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety and support the enforcement of UN prohibitions on the proliferation of weapons to non-state actors in the region, including to Lebanese Hizballah (UNSCR 1701).

Kosovo: Serbia**John Howell:**[\[117548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of tensions between Serbia and Kosovo; and what steps he is taking to help reduce tensions in the region.

Leo Docherty:

While the recent removal of roadblocks reduced immediate tensions, the risk of further spikes in tension between Serbia and Kosovo remains. We are working with partners to end the cycle of tensions and advance our shared long-term goal of normalisation of relations, including through our support for EU-facilitated Dialogue. During my visits to Kosovo and Serbia in December, I encouraged a constructive approach and engagement through meaningful dialogue. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for the Western Balkans, Lord Peach, echoed these messages during his 5 January visit to Kosovo. He plans to visit Serbia soon.

Mexico: Drugs**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[117477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to provide assistance to the Mexican government following reports of cartel violence following the arrest of Ovidio Guzman Lopez.

David Rutley:

The increasing level of violence in Mexico is a worrying trend, including the events of last week in the state of Sinaloa following the arrest of Ovidio Guzmán López. The British Embassy in Mexico City and senior British officials in London regularly engage on this with the Mexican authorities, including monitoring violence trends in Mexico and offering assistance in the field of Rule of Law.

Colleagues from the International Policing Assistance Services (IPAS) visited Mexico in March 2020 to advise the Secretary General of the National Public Security System in Mexico (SESNSP) on how to review Mexican policing techniques and to progress police reform. Following their report, UK experts plan to undertake further visits to Mexico to assist the SESNSP with the next stage of their police reform process.

Fabian Hamilton:[\[117478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is providing support to UK citizens in Culiacan, Mexico following reports of cartel violence in that region.

David Rutley:

On 30 September 2022, the UK Government advised against all but essential travel to Culiacán, along with the majority of the state of Sinaloa, due to increased levels of violence. On 6 January, UK officials also advised any UK citizens in the area to follow

the instructions of local authorities. The British Embassy in Mexico remains available to assist any British traveller who needs emergency assistance while travelling in Mexico.

■ **Palestinians: Intelligence Services**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[112081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2022 to Question 97558 on Palestinians: Intelligence Services, what the total value of UK aid is that the Government has contributed to the Palestinian Authority's Preventative Security Forces as of 16 December 2022.

David Rutley:

The UK's goal in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is to preserve the viability of the two-state solution as the best way to bring stability to the region. To deliver this goal, the UK is helping to develop the institutions of a future Palestinian State to ensure it can effectively deliver services for Palestinian people, including security, and act as a partner for peace with Israel. Our support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) security sector is helping to improve the accountability and transparency of the security services. Building the capacity of the PA security sector is extremely important in helping lay the groundwork for a future Palestinian state and a lasting solution to the conflict in the region.

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Hywel Williams:

[\[117481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential long-term impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on global food security; and what steps is he taking to mitigate these impacts.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Russia's invasion is destroying Ukraine's farms and infrastructure. Reductions in food on global markets caused price spikes in 2022. Instability will continue into 2023. The most vulnerable globally will suffer the worst impacts, such as increased malnutrition which can be deadly, and for survivors has lifelong implications.

We have supported the Black Sea Grain Initiative, under which over 17 million tonnes of grain have been exported from Ukraine. We also provided £10 million for equipment to move grain by rail. Elsewhere, we are working with international partners to support the vulnerable, including contributing £4.2 million to the Nutrition Match Fund.

■ Transcaucasus: Roads

Tim Loughton: [R] [\[117410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the blocking of the Lachin corridor between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has made clear that the closure of the Lachin corridor risks severe humanitarian consequences. I [Minister Docherty] issued a statement highlighting the importance of re-opening the Lachin corridor on 13 December. Our Embassies in Baku and Yerevan continue to urge the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to abide by all commitments in relation to the Lachin corridor in good faith and to settle the remaining conflict issues as soon as possible. The UK has spoken at the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe and at the United Nations Security Council, as well as in Baku, to urge the immediate reopening of the corridor given the risk of severe humanitarian consequences.

Tim Loughton: [R] [\[117411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken recent steps to join initiatives of other Western countries relating to the Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin Corridor.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has made clear that the closure of the Lachin corridor risks severe humanitarian consequences. I [Minister Docherty] issued a statement highlighting the importance of re-opening the Lachin corridor on 13 December. Our Embassies in Baku and Yerevan continue to urge the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to abide by all commitments in relation to the Lachin corridor in good faith and to settle the remaining conflict issues as soon as possible. The UK has spoken at the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe and at the United Nations Security Council, as well as in Baku, to urge the immediate reopening of the corridor given the risk of severe humanitarian consequences.

■ Trust Fund for Victims

Stephen Kinnock: [\[117611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what financial contributions the Government has made to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims in each year since 2010.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK has been one of the largest contributors to the Trust Fund for Victims, contributing £2.1million since 2010 in support of victim survivors of conflict related sexual and gender-based violence. The Fund implements Court-ordered reparations against a convicted person and provides physical, psychological and material support to victims and their families via its assistance programmes.

UK funding since 2010 can be broken down as follows: 2010 - €45,100; 2011 - €584,500; 2012 - €640,700; 2013 - €611,000; 2014 - €1,579,100; 2015 - €0; 2016 - €78,900; 2017 - €459,400; 2018 - €28,400; 2019 - €0; 2020 - €186,300; 2021 - €69,459; 2022 - €84,000

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[117612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of potential merits of using the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims as a means of providing financial compensation to Ukrainian victims of international crimes within the terms of the Rome Statute of that court.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The United Kingdom has provided €4.5 million to the International Criminal Court (ICC) Trust Fund for Victims since 2004, the most recent contribution being made in April 2022. The Fund implements Court-ordered reparations against a convicted person and provides physical, psychological and material support to victims and their families via its assistance programmes. The Fund's Board of Directors is appointed by the ICC's Assembly of State Parties and approves the allocations of assistance programmes.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards

Catherine West:

[\[117760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce A&E waiting times in NHS hospitals.

Will Quince:

A range of measures are in place to reduce accident and emergency waiting times in National Health Service hospitals. NHS England has set out a plan to substantially increase capacity and resilience this winter. NHS bed capacity will be increased by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, including a mix of new physical beds and expanding the use of innovative virtual wards to treat patients safely at home.

Our plan for patients set out further urgent action, including £500 million for an Adult Social Care Discharge Fund, helping people get out of hospitals quickly, freeing up beds and reducing long waits in accident and emergency. The Government has also announced an additional £200 million to enable the NHS to immediately buy up beds in the community to safely discharge thousands of patients from hospital and free up hospital capacity helping free up hospital beds so people can be admitted more quickly from accident and emergency to wards, reducing pressure on emergency departments.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[117889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to (a) update the policy paper entitled Alcohol Strategy, published on 23 March 2012, CM 8336 and (b) commission a new alcohol strategy; and what recent assessment he has made into the potential merits of implementing minimum unit pricing.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no current plans to introduce a standalone alcohol strategy. We have an existing agenda on tackling harms from alcohol, including an ambitious programme to establish specialist Alcohol Care Teams in hospitals.

The Government published 'From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives' on 6 December 2021. While the focus of the Strategy is drugs, commissioning and delivery of drug and alcohol treatment services are integrated in England. This means that implementation of the Strategy will also benefit people seeking alcohol treatment, through mechanisms such as new commissioning standards, plans to build back the workforce and new investment to rebuild local authority commissioned substance misuse treatment services in England.

We look forward to seeing the findings from the evaluations of impact of minimum unit pricing in Scotland and Wales. We will consider those findings in detail once available.

■ Ambulance Services: Shropshire**Helen Morgan:**[\[117980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the reasons for delays to category 1 and 2 ambulance responses in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Will Quince:

A range of factors drive longer ambulance response times, including in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. A key issue is hospital occupancy pressures leading to ambulance handover delays. The Government has announced funding for the National Health Service with £250 million to support patient discharge and patient flow.

■ Antibiotics: Erith and Thamesmead**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[117840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that pharmacies in Erith and Thamesmead constituency have an adequate antibiotics, including those used to treat Strep A.

Will Quince:

The information on medicine supply at a local level is not held centrally.

The continued demand for antibiotics to treat Strep A is making it difficult for some pharmacies to obtain certain antibiotics. We have been taking decisive action to address these temporary issues and to improve access to these medicines. These actions include working with manufacturers and wholesalers to ensure that they expedite deliveries, bring forward stock they have to ensure it gets to where it is needed and to boost supply to meet demand as quickly as possible. Deliveries to wholesalers and pharmacies are currently being made, with more expected in the coming days and weeks.

Eight Serious Shortage Protocols have been issued to allow pharmacists to supply an alternative form of penicillin V, or alternative antibiotic, if they don't have the specific product stated on the prescription.

■ Cancer: Research

Theresa Villiers:

[\[117504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has provided for research into (a) prevention and (b) the treatment of cancer in each of the last 12 years.

Helen Whately:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR funds cancer research, including research into prevention and treatment. The following table shows NIHR spend on cancer research between 2010/11 to 2021/22. The information on allocation to prevention and treatment research is not held.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND
2010/11	£100 million
2011/12	£104 million
2012/13	£133 million
2013/14	£129 million
2014/15	£134 million
2015/16	£142 million
2016/17	£137 million
2017/18	£136 million
2018/19	£132 million
2019/20	£138 million
2020/21	£73 million

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL SPEND
2021/22	£98 million

■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges

Sarah Green:

[117932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring (a) Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board and (b) other integrated care boards to provide fees to care homes which are (i) in line with and (ii) above inflation.

Helen Whately:

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to manage their local care markets. The Care Act guidance states that they should assure themselves and have evidence that fee levels are appropriate. The Government is making available up to £7.5 billion over two years to support adult social care and discharge. The historic boost will put adult social care system on a stronger financial footing.

■ Dental Services

Sarah Olney:

[117783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of dental activity were delivered in each of the last five years.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS Digital publishes annual dental statistics for England, which are available from the link below:

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

■ Dental Services: Slough

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[117933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase NHS dental provision for vulnerable NHS patients in Slough constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

In July 2022, we announced a package of improvements to the National Health Service dental system, detailed in 'Our plan for patients', which outlined how we will increase access to dental services across England, including for vulnerable patients, and make the NHS dental contract more attractive for dentists. We have taken action to implement these changes, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022. NHS England have published additional guidance for dentists and commissioners as part of this package. Discussions on further improvements to

the NHS dental system are underway and being led by NHS England, involving the British Dental Association, other dental stakeholder groups and patients.

■ **Dental Services: Vulnerable Adults**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[117934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that vulnerable NHS patients who experience difficulties with communication have adequate access to NHS dental care.

Neil O'Brien:

We are committed to providing high quality National Health Service dental services to people in England regardless of their age, background or disability. Community Dental Services provide NHS dental care to people who cannot be treated in general dental practices. This includes people with learning disabilities, mental health issues or are in situations or locations that is out of reach.

Many of the dentistry commissioning functions undertaken by NHS England will transfer to integrated care boards (ICBs) from April 2023. ICBs will be responsible for meeting the needs of the local population by working with patient groups, including on communication needs. NHS England has made available to commissioners an Assurance Framework to provide assurance that commissioning functions are carried out safely and effectively by ICBs.

■ **Diabetes: Children and Young People**

Geraint Davies:

[\[114507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for the trend in the level of type two diabetes in (a) young adults and (b) children in the last five years; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce levels of type two diabetes in these groups.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. Obesity is one of the leading causes for type 2 diabetes, including in children and young people. New regulations on out of home calorie labelling for food sold in large businesses, including restaurants, cafes and takeaways, came into force in April 2022. Additionally, restrictions on the promotion by location of products high in fat, salt or sugar came into force on 1 October 2022. We are also working with the food industry to ensure it is easier for the public to make healthier choices and make further progress on reformulation.

■ **Diabetes: Disadvantaged**

Geraint Davies:

[\[117412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the National Diabetes Audit Young People with Type 2 Diabetes Report 2019-20, published by NHS Digital on 12 August 2021; what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in under

40's being four times higher in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas; and whether he is taking steps to reduce inequalities in type 2 diabetes risk among young adults and children living in more and less deprived areas.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made. Given the inequalities in who develops type 2 diabetes we continue to work with the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NHS DPP) providers and integrated care systems to raise awareness and boost uptake from those in deprived groups.

■ **Emergency Calls and NHS 111: Staff**

Wes Streeting:

[\[113351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the commitments made in his Department's policy paper Our plan for patients, published on 22 September 2022, how many (a) 111 call handlers and (b) 999 call handlers were employed by NHS England as of 19 December 2022.

Will Quince:

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

■ **Epilepsy: Cannabis**

Catherine West:

[\[117743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure the availability of cannabis-based medicines on the NHS for patients with epilepsy.

Alex Sobel:

[\[117972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to establish trials on the use of Bedrocan cannabis medicines for paediatric drug-resistant epilepsy.

Will Quince:

The licensed cannabis-based medicine Epidyolex is routinely prescribed on the National Health Service for two forms of epilepsy. However, clinical guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence demonstrate a clear need for further evidence to support routine prescribing and funding decisions for unlicensed cannabis-based medicines on the NHS.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has issued two calls for research proposals and a highlight notice on medicinal cannabis. Manufacturers, including those for Bedrocan Oils, are responsible for generating evidence to support the use of these products and to seek regulatory approval. The Government encourages manufacturers to do so and offers scientific and research advice from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the NIHR.

■ Food: Advertising

Sir George Howarth:

[\[117480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of delaying the implementation of the TV and online unhealthy food advertising restrictions to October 2025 on (a) rates of childhood obesity and (b) meeting the 2030 ambition to halve childhood obesity.

Sarah Olney:

[\[117776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of delaying the implementation of the TV and online unhealthy food advertising restrictions to October 2025 on (a) rates of childhood obesity and (b) meeting the 2030 ambition to halve childhood obesity.

Sarah Olney:

[\[117777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the reasons for which the food industry requires more time to prepare for restrictions on television advertising of products high in fat, salt or sugar.

Claire Hanna:

[\[117975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2022 to Question 88835 on Food: Advertising, when he plans to publish an assessment of the impact of extending the delay to restrictions banning the advertisement of unhealthy food products before 9pm and online paid advertisements.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. A full impact assessment was published in June 2021 providing detail on the expected impact of the restrictions.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[117658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of delaying the introduction of legislation to protect children from junk food advertising until 2025.

Neil O'Brien:

We have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on improving health and wellbeing, including measures to reduce obesity.

■ Health Services: Racial Discrimination

Ian Byrne:

[\[114761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report by The Traveller Movement entitled The last acceptable form of racism, published in September 2017, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the research on the proportion of people from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds that have experienced discrimination in health care.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Health: Cost of Living**

Ian Lavery:

[\[118963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on the nation's health.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. However, this winter we are spending £55 billion to help households and businesses with their energy bills, amongst the largest support plans in Europe. A typical household will save around £900 this winter through the price guarantee in addition to the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme.

We are also spending £9.3 billion over the next five years on energy efficiency and clean heat, making homes easier and cheaper to heat. We will spend £26 billion in total on cost of living support next year, including the £900 cost of living payment for eight million poorer households.

We have also put in place the largest ever increase to the National Living Wage, for two million workers, taking it up to £10.42, which is worth over £1,600 a year to a full-time worker aged 23 and over.

■ **Hospital Beds**

John Redwood:

[\[117396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to increase the number of beds in NHS hospitals.

Catherine West:

[\[117756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of NHS hospital beds.

Will Quince:

As part of the NHS England's operational resilience and capacity plan for winter, the National Health Service is increasing bed capacity by the equivalent of 7,000 general and acute hospital beds. This includes a mix of new physical beds and innovative virtual wards.

On 9 January the Government announced £200 million of funding to allow local areas to buy thousands of extra beds in care homes and other settings to help discharge more patients who are fit to leave hospital and free up hospital beds for those who need them. This is an addition of the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund announced in December which is also supporting hospital bed capacity.

■ Hospital Beds and Social Services

Catherine West:

[\[117757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS hospital beds are occupied by medically-fit patients who cannot be discharged due to a lack of social care.

Will Quince:

As of the week ending 1 January 2023, there were approximately 12,938 individuals in hospital in England who did not meet the criteria to reside and have not been discharged. Data for patients who cannot be discharged due to lack of social care is not collected by NHS England for all patients with no criteria to reside.

■ Hospitals: Buildings

Daisy Cooper:

[\[103051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS hospital buildings were built before 1948 in England; what the ten oldest NHS hospital buildings are in England; and to which NHS trusts these buildings belong.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 8 December 2022]: There are currently 284 hospital buildings in use by National Health Service trusts in England which were built prior to 1948. The information on the ten oldest hospitals buildings is not held in the format requested.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Stephen McPartland:

[\[117579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS staff have received the flu vaccination in (a) 2022 and (b) each of the last five years.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows the number of frontline National Health Service healthcare workers (HCWs) vaccinated with the flu vaccine, for each of the last five years.

	NUMBER OF HCWS WITH DIRECT PATIENT CARE WHERE VACCINATION DATA HAS BEEN PROVIDED	NUMBERS VACCINATED	PERCENTAGE VACCINE UPTAKE
1 September 2022 to 30 November 2022	1,105,078	461,803	41.8%
1 September 2021 to 28 February 2022	813,435	492,125	60.5%
1 September 2020 to 28 February 2021	1,124,370	863,792	76.8%

	NUMBER OF HCWS WITH DIRECT PATIENT CARE WHERE VACCINATION DATA HAS BEEN PROVIDED	NUMBERS VACCINATED	PERCENTAGE VACCINE UPTAKE
1 September 2019 to 28 February 2020	1,040,360	772,872	74.3%
1 September 2018 to 28 February 2019	1,051,851	739,187	70.3%
1 September 2017 to 28 February 2018	1,025,547	704,242	68.7%

Source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-influenza-and-covid-19-vaccine-uptake-in-frontline-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2022-to-2023>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-and-covid-19-vaccine-uptake-in-frontline-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2021-to-2022>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2020-to-2021>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2019-to-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2018-to-2019>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/seasonal-flu-vaccine-uptake-in-healthcare-workers-monthly-data-2017-to-2018>

Notes:

1. All data is final end of season data apart from the 2022 to 2023 season.
2. This data is provisional monthly data (published on 22 December 2022) and may vary slightly following further data validation checks.
3. The 2022 to 2023 season includes independent sector health care providers. In previous seasons this data was reported as part of general practitioner data returns rather than as part of NHS Trusts in England.

■ Life Expectancy

Liz Twist:

[117924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his Department's policy to narrow the gap in healthy life expectancy between areas where it is highest and lowest by 2030.

Neil O'Brien:

The ambition to improve healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035 and reduce the gap by 2030 remains Government policy. A significant proportion of ill-health is preventable. We are focusing on the major conditions which contribute to early mortality and reduce years of good health and factors such as smoking, poor diet and alcohol which disproportionately impact some communities.

The measures include the ambition for England to be smoke-free by 2030 and addressing obesity through working with the food industry to ensure it is easier to make healthier choices and to increase progress on the reformulation of foods. We will set out more information on plans to address health disparities in due course.

Meat: Inspections**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[117461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the qualified meat inspectors working for the Food Standards Agency are employees; and how many of these are (a) permanent, (b) temporary, (c) casual and (d) agency employees.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[117462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the hourly rate of pay for (a) employed and (b) agency trained meat inspectors at the Food Standard Agency.

Neil O'Brien:

There is a total of 659, including 57 casuals, qualified meat hygiene inspectors employed by the Food Standards Agency and our contractor. Of the 314 qualified meat hygiene inspectors employed by the Food Standards Agency, 296 are permanent and 18 are casual, paid an hourly rate of between £13.99 to £18.00 per hour. 306 qualified meat hygiene inspectors are employed by a contractor including 39 casuals. The information on the hourly rate of pay is unavailable as it is commercially sensitive.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Seema Malhotra:**[\[117592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for Children and Adolescent Mental Health services assessments in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

Integrated care boards are responsible for ensuring appropriate provision of services to meet the health and care needs of the local population. Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing an additional £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 to expand National Health Service mental health services to allow an additional 345,000 children and young people to access support, including in the Feltham and Heston constituency area. In 2021/22, we provided an additional £79 million for approximately 22,500 children and young people to access community health

services. The NHS Long Term Plan also stated the aim of increasing the mental health workforce in England by an additional 27,000 professionals by 2023/24.

Assessments for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may also be received through child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Following an investment of £13 million in 2021/22, we will provide £2.5 million in 2022/23 to test and embed improved autism diagnostic pathways. NHS England is developing a national framework on how children, young people and adults should receive an autism diagnosis to improve the quality of these diagnostic processes and reduce waiting times.

■ Mortality Rates

Ben Lake:

[\[117873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of ONS data showing that excess deaths in England and Wales were higher than the five-year average in September, October and November 2022; what steps he is taking to help reduce excess deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

Whilst a detailed assessment is not yet available, it is likely that a combination of factors has contributed to the Office of National Statistics measure of excess mortality, including high flu prevalence, the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

We are taking steps to help reduce excess deaths, including those which involve COVID-19. Vaccines remain the first line of defence against COVID-19. Antivirals and other treatments provide a necessary additional line of defence by playing a crucial role in protecting patients who become infected with COVID-19, particularly those who for whom the vaccine may be less effective such as the immunosuppressed. We are preparing for variants of COVID-19 and respiratory challenges, with an integrated COVID-19 booster and flu vaccination programme, minimising hospital admissions from both viruses. This winter, it is vital that eligible people get their booster jab and their flu jab to protect themselves, their loved ones and the National Health Service.

We are also taking action to reduce excess deaths due to other factors. The NHS has published a delivery plan setting out a clear vision for how the NHS will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. The plan commits the NHS to deliver nine million additional treatments and diagnostic procedures over the next three years and around 30 percent more elective activity than it was doing before the pandemic by 2024/25. Through the pathway improvement programme, we will create extra capacity for elective care and improve patient health outcomes.

We are making progress in restoring services for preventable conditions such as cardiovascular disease (CVD). Based on the current rate of recovery, we expect NHS Health Check delivery, a core part of our CVD prevention pathway, to return to pre-pandemic levels by June 2023. The Department continues to work closely with

partners to consider what more can be done to improve the prevention, detection, diagnosis and management of CVD.

■ **NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin**

Helen Morgan:

[\[117979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, published on 17 November 2022, CP 751, how much and what proportion of the additional funding allocated to enable rapid action to improve urgent and emergency, elective, and primary care performance will be provided to the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board.

Will Quince:

The Autumn Statement 2022 provides the National Health Service with an additional £3.3 billion for each of the next two years. Overall planning guidance for the NHS was published on 23 December last year and NHS England will confirm associated allocations to individual commissioners, including NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board, shortly.

■ **NHS: Pay**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[117686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to increase the budget available for the NHS pay settlement for 2023-24 in order to allow the NHS Pay Review Body to recommend a higher pay settlement for that year should it deem it appropriate.

Will Quince:

The independent Pay Review Body (PRB) process is the established mechanism for determining pay uplifts in the public sector, including for staff working in the National Health Service. The Government has asked the independent PRBs for recommendations on pay for staff in scope for 2023/24. The PRBs are independent so we cannot pre-empt its recommendations, which they make based on all the evidence they receive, not just that submitted by the Government. Once the recommendations have been made, the Government will work closely with NHS England to determine the appropriate response.

■ **NHS: Pay Settlements**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[114741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the recent NHS pay offer on NHS staff morale.

Will Quince:

The independent Pay Review Body process is the established mechanism for determining pay increases in the public sector, including for National Health Service staff. In forming its recommendations, the Pay Review Bodies consider a range of evidence, including the cost of living, inflation, recruitment, retention, morale and

value for the taxpayer. The Government accepted the recommendations for 2022/23 in full.

■ **Nurses: Industrial Disputes**

Claire Hanna: [117971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to negotiate with nursing unions on (a) resolving the strikes and (b) other issues affecting the sector.

Will Quince:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, met representatives from Royal College of Nursing several times towards the end of 2022. He has been clear how important he thinks it is to keep talking about how together we can make the National Health Service a better place to work. He will be continuing to meet health unions, including the Royal College of Nursing, in 2023. The first meeting following the Christmas break took place on 9 January.

■ **Oral Tobacco: Health Hazards**

Kenny MacAskil: [117931]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when the Committee on Toxicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment will publish its final position on the toxicological risks associated with oral nicotine pouches.

Neil O'Brien:

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) is currently reviewing the evidence on the use of oral nicotine pouches and assessing the risk to users. The COT has already published a draft statement in July 2022 and will publish a final position statement once the review is complete, in early 2023.

The draft statement is available at the following link:

<https://cot.food.gov.uk/First%20draft%20statement%20on%20the%20bioavailability%20of%20nicotine%20from%20the%20use%20of%20oral%20nicotine%20pouches%20and%20assessment%20of%20the%20potential%20toxicological%20risk%20to%20users>

■ **Pectus Excavatum: Surgery**

Lee Anderson: [117927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing corrective surgery for pectus excavatum through the NHS.

Will Quince:

There are a range of surgical and non-surgical treatments available through the National Health Service in England to manage the condition. Individuals with a pectus

deformity may be referred to a thoracic surgical clinic for advice. Treatment options by assessment of the type of pectus deformity, degree of deformity, simple versus mixed deformity, and determination of whether the deformity is isolated or part of a syndrome. In most cases, while surgery can correct the chest wall deformity, surgical intervention does not take place. This is because the majority of people experience only mild physical or psychological symptoms associated with having a pectus deformity. In these cases, non-surgical options include posture, exercise programmes, bracing and psychological support.

■ Prescription Drugs: Fees and Charges

Rachael Maskell:

[\[117692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will conduct a review of the types of prescription drugs which are (a) exempt and (b) are not exempt from payment for people with long term medical conditions.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for York Central to the answer I gave on 20 December 2022 to Question 110752.

■ Streptococcus: Antibiotics

Grahame Morris:

[\[117564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle supply issues affecting antibiotics for the treatment of Strep A.

Grahame Morris:

[\[117565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with generic drug manufacturers on increasing the supply of antibiotics affected by the serious shortage protocols.

Will Quince:

The continued demand for antibiotics to treat Strep A is making it difficult for some pharmacies to obtain certain antibiotics. We have been taking decisive action to address these temporary issues and to improve access to these medicines. These actions include working with manufacturers and wholesalers to expedite deliveries, bring forward existing stock to help ensure it gets to where it is needed and to boost supply to meet demand as quickly as possible. Deliveries to wholesalers and pharmacies are currently being made, with more expected in the coming days and week.

Eight Serious Shortage Protocols have been issued to allow pharmacists to supply an alternative form of penicillin V, or alternative antibiotic, if they do not have the specific product stated on the prescription.

■ Topiramate: Shortages

Emma Hardy: [\[117949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on public health of shortages of the prescription drug Topamax; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

We are aware of a short-term issue with the branded version of topiramate tablets, Topamax, until early March 2023. However, all strengths of generic topiramate tablets are in stock and available to patients during this time.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Children**

Afzal Khan: [\[113422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many decision makers in her Department were fully trained to make decisions on unaccompanied asylum seeking children's claims as of 19 December 2022.

Afzal Khan: [\[113423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the length training is for Home Office decision makers to enable them to consider children's asylum applications.

Afzal Khan: [\[113424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral statement by made by the Prime Minister on 13 December 2022, Official Report, columns 885-88 on Illegal Immigration, whether it is her Department's intention to have 2,400 asylum decision makers; and how many of the new decisions makers her Department plans to train will make decisions on children's asylum applications.

Afzal Khan: [\[113425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many decisions is a decision maker in her Department expected to make on average each week if they are deciding applications of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Afzal Khan: [\[113426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to reintroduce a service standard for children's asylum application; and if she will make statement.

Afzal Khan: [\[113427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department uses criteria to prioritise outstanding children's asylum cases.

Afzal Khan:

[113428]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum claims made by children were decided without an interview in the last (a) six, (b) 12, (c) 18 and (d) 24 months.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office takes our duty of care towards children and young people extremely seriously, and we prioritise applications from children and young people.

The Home Office does not publish the data requested. However we are able to provide data on the number of initial decisions on asylum applications from unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), which can be found in the latest Immigration statistics, year ending September 2022: [List of tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2022).

UASC generally enter the care system to be accommodated and supported by a local authority as looked after children. The Home Office budget provides significant support to local authorities in this area in addition to existing local Government funding. The latest published statistics from the Department for Education, for the year ending 31 March 2022, show there were 5,540 UASC being cared for in England alone, an increase of 34% from the previous reporting year. This does not include the high intake seen this summer.

The Home Office has a comprehensive training programme and mentoring framework in place for all asylum decision makers. Decision makers who specifically deal with children's claims complete an additional training on Keeping Children Safe and have an additional period of mentoring.

Our aim is for Asylum Casework to have 2,500 caseworkers by August 2023, with around 10% dedicated to children's casework and we have recruitment plans in place to ensure we reach those numbers.

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA) came into force on 28 June 2022. In accordance with NABA, all new asylum claims made on or after 28 June 2022 will be considered and processed under the new legislation, whilst existing claims will be worked through under previous legislation and asylum policies.

The Asylum Casework team are working to reintroduce service standards and are aligning with changes being introduced through the NABA. Our intention to reintroduce service standards aligns with the recommendation from the recent Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's (ICIBI) published report - An inspection of asylum casework (November 2021). The re-induction will also include children's asylum claims.

■ Asylum: Finance and Housing

Philip Davies: [\[117532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers who have had their applications rejected in each of the last five years have (a) accommodation and (b) financial support provided to them from the public purse.

Philip Davies: [\[117533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum seekers who have had their applications rejected in each of the last five years are having (a) accommodation and (b) financial support paid for through the public purse as of 6 January 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on initial decisions on asylum applications can be found in table Asy_D02 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. The latest data relate to the year ending September 2022. Data for the year ending December 2022 will be published on 23 February 2023.

Data on asylum seekers in receipt of support can be found in table Asy_D09 of the '[asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Please note the data show a snapshot as at the last day of each quarter, rather than the number of asylum seekers receiving support over the entire quarter. The latest data relates to as at 30 September 2022. Data as at 31 December 2022 will be published on 23 February 2023.

Guidance on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

The Home Office publishes data on asylum work in progress in the [Migration Transparency Data](#). Data on the number of failed asylum seekers subject to removal action are provided in table Asy_03 of the [immigration and protection data](#).

■ Asylum: Standards

Mick Whitley: [\[117926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken (a) to process asylum claims and (b) between asylum claims and (i) interviews and (ii) decisions.

Robert Jenrick:

To accelerate decision making we are driving productivity improvements by simplifying and modernising our system. This includes measures like shorter, more focussed interviews; removing unnecessary interviews; making guidance simpler and more accessible; dealing with cases more swiftly where they can be certified as

manifestly unfounded; recruiting extra decision makers; and allocating dedicated resources for different nationalities.

■ Civil Partnerships: Children

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[117479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that children are given British citizenship when they are born outside the UK to British parents in same-sex couples.

Robert Jenrick:

A child born overseas will acquire British citizenship automatically if one of their parents is a British citizen, able to pass on that status, and recognised as the legal parent in UK law. Where a child is not British automatically there are options to register the child as a British citizen.

The Department for Health and Social Care have asked the fertility regulator, the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority, to start a consultation process about prioritising issues for reform in fertility law. This legislation covers who is a child's parent in cases of assisted reproduction.

■ Gangs: Arrests

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[114546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests for gang related activity there were in (a) Romford, (b) Havering and (c) nationally in the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes information on arrests but not explicitly on 'gang-related' offences as this refers to a wide range of activity – it is not an arrest category in and of itself. We remain committed to tackling the harm caused by criminal gangs, including serious violence and drug related activity.

We are taking a twin-track approach to tackling serious violence, combining tough enforcement to get dangerous weapons off the streets – including through stop and search methods – with programmes that steer young people away from crime.

The Government has made £130m available this year alone (22/23) to tackle serious violence, including £64m for Violence Reduction Units and £30m for our policing programme Grip.

Since 2019, we have allocated the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) £33.7m, including £12.6m this financial year (2022/23). The London VRU delivers a range of interventions that support young people at risk of involvement in serious violence and gangs, which requires close work with those local communities affected.

We are also continuing to provide funding to the Metropolitan Police to increase enforcement activity in areas where the most violence occurs, through our Grip hotspot policing programme. The Government has allocated approximately £52.6m

over the last three years to the Grip programme in London, including £7.9m for this financial year (2022/23). Through this programme, the Metropolitan Police are delivering data-driven, targeted visible patrols to suppress violence where it is most concentrated.

On tackling drug-related activity, we are investing up to £145m over the next three years to bolster our flagship County Lines Programme, which has already resulted in over 2,900 lines closed, over 8,000 arrests and in the engagement of over 9,500 individuals through safeguarding interventions. As part of this programme, we are funding the Metropolitan Police's Operation Orochi to support activity to disrupt and close lines originating in London.

We are also funding Catch22 to provide a specialist support and rescue service for under 25's from the major exporting force areas (London, the West Midlands, Merseyside and Greater Manchester), and their families, who are criminally exploited through county lines, to help them safely reduce and exit their involvement.

In addition, our Young Women and Girls' Fund is supporting young women and girls impacted by gang related exploitation and abuse. Young Women's Workers across England and Wales are providing direct support to vulnerable young women to steer them away from harm.

■ **HM Passport Office: Email**

Jon Trickett: [117463]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many email enquiries from hon. Members are awaiting a response from the Passport Office as of 6 January 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not have the information requested.

Data about intake and performance in answering Hon. Members correspondence are published quarterly with the latest quarter available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-q3-2022.

■ **Human Trafficking: Syria**

Mr David Davis: [114528]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department (a) issued and (b) used a standard operating procedure to help prevent the trafficking of vulnerable individuals from Britain to Syria by ISIS between 2013 and 2017.

Mr David Davis: [114529]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department made an assessment of the level of risk of trafficking as part of its strategy to counter recruitment by (a) ISIS and (b) other groups in the period between 2013 and 2017.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government took a number of steps to address the serious risks associated with individuals travelling to Syria to fight for or otherwise support Daesh and other terrorist groups.

Since 2011, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised against all travel to Syria. The police and local authorities distributed over 200,000 leaflets and 30,000 posters, outlining the danger of travel to Syria.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 enables police officers at ports to temporarily seize and retain travel documents to disrupt intended travel when they reasonably suspect that a person intends to travel to engage in terrorism-related activity outside the UK. This power was used on 55 occasions between 2015 and 2017 (15 in 2017), and in some cases, has led to longer-term disruptive action. The Royal Prerogative can also be used to refuse a passport application, or withdraw an existing passport, under the public interest criteria. The Royal Prerogative was exercised to deny access to British passport facilities to 84 individuals between 2013 and 2017.

Our Prevent strategy includes work to identify and support individuals at risk of radicalisation. Since the introduction of the Prevent duty in 2015, over 3,000 referrals have resulted in individuals identified as being susceptible to radicalisation receiving support to move away from violent ideologies that could have resulted in harm to themselves, or others.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Mr John Baron:****[113189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to process security and other checks for British Council contractors in Afghanistan under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 3.

Robert Jenrick:

Those eligible for resettlement to the UK will be subject to security checks as set out in the [GOV.UK guidance](#).

■ Visas: Skilled Workers**Justin Tomlinson:****[117580]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of permitting Tier 2 ICT visa holders, who had switched to a Skilled Worker visa, to be allowed to use their time spent on a Tier 2 ICT visas as a route to settlement in the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

It is Home Office policy that entry and stay under routes designed to accommodate intra-company transfers is temporary and should not lead to settlement.

Consequently, leave granted to ICTs does not count towards settlement if the holder switches into another economic migration route. The ICT routes facilitate mobility of

key staff in accordance with our trade commitments and are not intended to give access to the UK labour market long term.

JUSTICE

■ Civil Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Afzal Khan:

[117893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid offices with a civil legal aid contract started zero cases by each (a) local authority and (b) area of law in the (i) 2020-21, (ii) 2021-22 and (iii) 2022-23 financial year.

Mike Freer:

The requested information can be found in the attached table.

An individual office may hold a civil legal aid contract in more than category of law.

Data for 2022/23 is a year-to-date figure reflective of the work reported between 1 April 2022 to 15 December, inclusive. As such it is not directly comparable with 2020-21 and 2021-22. Please note that the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) commissions and monitors legal aid services by 'Procurement Area' rather than by local authority. Procurement areas differ for different categories of law.

The LAA frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision of legal aid, in all categories of law, throughout England and Wales. The LAA moves quickly, where issues arise, to secure additional provision and to ensure demand for legal aid services is met across the country. The LAA contracts with a range of legal aid providers of varying size and capacity to take on new cases. Additionally, legal advice on a range of civil matters including housing, debt, discrimination and education is available, wherever people are, through the Civil Legal Advice telephone service.

Demand for legal aid services may vary across different categories of law. In particular, there may be low demand for services in categories such as clinical negligence or welfare benefits where the scope of services funded through legal aid was reduced under the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

In early 2023 the LAA will be opening up a tender for new entrants who want to bid for a 2018 civil legal aid contract in all categories.

Attachments:

1. Table_117893 [\[2023-01-11 PQ 117893.xlsx\]](#)

■ County Courts: Personal Records

Steve McCabe:

[117433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what safeguards his Department has in place within the County Court system to help ensure that the names of parties to court cases

are accurately recorded and are updated if a person's name is changed, including following a divorce, during the course of court proceedings.

Mike Freer:

It is the responsibility of the parties involved in court proceedings to ensure that the court is informed of the correct names of the parties, as well as any change of name during proceedings.

Most applications issued using the digital services of HMCTS automatically update the courts' case management system with the names provided by the applicant. Whilst paper applications will usually require manual data entry by HMCTS, management checks are undertaken on sample of cases to ensure that case records accurately reflect the information provided on the application form.

In a divorce case further checks are also carried out at the decree nisi/conditional order and decree absolute/final order stage as a final check before the divorce is legally granted.

Throughout court proceedings any party can inform the court of a change of name or request a correction if an error has been made.

■ **Medomsley Detention Centre**

Lee Anderson:

[\[117928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of undertaking an inquiry into historic abuse at Medomsley Detention Centre.

Damian Hinds:

The government has the deepest sympathy for the men who suffered sexual or physical abuse while detained at Medomsley Detention Centre.

A judicial review claim has been launched in regard to the government's decision not to hold a public inquiry into Medomsley. It would be inappropriate to comment further while legal proceedings are ongoing.

■ **Police Custody: Legal Opinion**

Janet Daby:

[\[117944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to review the Joint Interim Interview Protocol.

Mike Freer:

We continue to keep the Joint Interim Interview Protocol under review.

As noted in the Government's full response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review consultation, published in November 2022, we are exploring the further use of remote legal advice in police stations. We will work with partners from across the justice system and related stakeholders.

Janet Daby:

[\[117946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of using remote legal advice in police custody on the (a) uptake of legal advice, (b) client confidence in legal advice and (c) the outcomes of detention interviews.

Mike Freer:

The Government's full response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review consultation, published in November 2022, outlined work underway to explore the further use of remote legal advice in police stations as part of the development of the future criminal legal aid services contract.

Consideration of the provision of remote legal advice in police stations will involve sector-wide collaboration, including with the Home Office, His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), the judiciary, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the police.

■ Powers of Entry: Meters

Beth Winter:

[\[114828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the burden of proof required by an energy supplier is to demonstrate they are acting as a last resort in seeking a warrant to install a prepayment meter.

Mike Freer:

Under the applicable statutory framework, in order to grant an application to enforce a right of entry, a justice must be satisfied that:

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

The justice must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that these grounds apply. The legislation, which the Justice of the Peace must apply, does not require the energy supplier to demonstrate they are acting as a last resort in seeking a warrant to install a prepayment meter to avoid disconnecting the customer's supply.

■ Prison Accommodation

Steve Reed:

[\[117599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many operational prison cells were there in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

The operational capacity of the prison estate is best understood by the number of places rather than number of cells, and this is how data is recorded by HMPPS. A table showing the total useable operational capacity of the prison system as at the end of January since 2007 has been provided below.

YEAR	JANUARY
2007	80375
2008	80778
2009	84902
2010	86313
2011	88009
2012	89399
2013	90105
2014	85657
2015	88286
2016	87969
2017	86595
2018	86749
2019	85079
2020	85049
2021	81072
2022	81292
6th Jan 2023	84431

Kate Hollern:

[117613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made on the availability of prison places in 2023.

Damian Hinds:

The Ministry of Justice continually monitors the availability of prison places and will ensure availability of places sufficient for the requirement.

Following a sharp increase in the adult male prison population in the autumn we formally activated Operation Safeguard, working alongside the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to provide additional capacity as a precautionary measure as needed, to ensure the smooth running of the prison estate. No police cells have yet been used.

To ensure ongoing availability, we are delivering 20,000 additional, modern prison places, the largest prison build programme in a century. We have already delivered over 3,100 of these additional places to date.

■ **Prisoners: Foreign Nationals**

Tim Loughton: [117404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many overseas nationals are imprisoned in the UK by nationality.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested, in relation to England and Wales, can be found in Table 1.7 at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1113584/Population_30Sep2022.ods.

The table provides information in relation to all prisoners in England and Wales, and to foreign nationals held in prison in England and Wales, as of 30 September 2022, the latest publication of the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **Building Safety Fund: Leeds**

Hilary Benn: [117474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is having discussions with the owners of Cartier House in Leeds Dock on remediating unsafe cladding and other fire safety risks; and whether his Department has agreed to provide funding from The Building Safety Fund to help support the cost of addressing related fire-safety risks at Cartier House.

Lee Rowley:

The Department issued a funding agreement on 31 October 2022 for £581,274 from the Building Safety Fund to the applicant for Cartier House in Leeds Dock for 'pre-tender support'. Pre-tender support is advance funding to enable the applicant to get to the point at which they have a contract in place to remediate the cladding on Cartier House, including funding for scoping the project, appointing a professional team, and developing a works specification. Homes England, the Department's Delivery Partner for the Building Safety Fund, wrote to the applicant on 12 December 2022 asking them to sign urgently and return the funding agreement.

■ **Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates: Non-payment**

Sir Christopher Chope: [117423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much (a) council tax (b) business rates remained uncollected in England at the end of (i) 2019-20, (ii) 2020/21 and (iii) 2021/22.

Lee Rowley:

Data on the amount of council tax and business rates arrears outstanding for these years can be found in Tables 7 and 8 of the 'Collection Rates and receipts of council tax and business rates' statistical release. The latest release can be found [here](#).

■ Empty Property**John Spellar:****[117450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the number of empty residential properties in England.

Lucy Frazer:

The UK Government wants to encourage empty homes back into use, and empower local leaders to reinvest in their communities. Local authorities already have many powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same level of reward for bringing an empty home back into use as building a new one.

The latest data tables on dwelling stock, including vacant homes can be found [here](#).

■ Sleeping Rough**Sir Stephen Timms:****[117413]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of progress on the target to end rough sleeping by 2024; and if he will make a statement.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping and has made excellent progress on its manifesto commitment. The most recent snapshot published in February 2022 showed the number of people sleeping rough is at an eight-year low and has almost halved since 2017. We published our refreshed rough sleeping strategy in September 2022, which set out our defined vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

That said, it is important to acknowledge the significant economic challenges ahead and how Government is focused on getting the public finances on a sustainable footing whilst protecting the most vulnerable members in society. This is why we are investing £2 billion over the next three years into tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

■ Waking Watch Relief Fund**Sir Mike Penning:****[117511]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local authorities allocating funding to waking watches in tower blocks.

Lee Rowley:

The Waking Watch Relief Fund was launched in January 2021 and the Waking Watch Replacement Fund was launched in January 2022. The funds covered the cost of installing a fire alarm to replace waking watch measures in buildings where a waking watch was in place and where those costs were being passed on to leaseholders.

As of 30 November 2022, 237 applications across both funds have been approved which will enable Waking Watch measures to be replaced with an alarm system in 368 buildings. Of the 368 buildings approved for funding, 314 have completed alarm installations.

The department publishes a monthly data release which includes information on the Waking Watch Relief and Replacement Funds which can be found [here](#).

We continue to monitor the use of waking watches and welcome comments and feedback on the properties with experience of them.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Housing: Northern Ireland****Mr Gregory Campbell:****[117484]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will have discussions with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the withdrawal of tenders for home maintenance contracts.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is a non-departmental public body and the withdrawal of tenders for home maintenance contracts would be a matter for NIHE management in conjunction, as appropriate, with the Department for Communities as the accountable Northern Ireland department.

SCOTLAND**■ Defence: Scotland****Wendy Morton:****[902940]**

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on Scotland's role in the defence and security of the UK.

John Lamont:

Scotland Office Ministers have regular discussions with the Ministry of Defence on all matters relating to defence in Scotland.

This includes the critical role of our armed forces' presence at our strategic bases in Scotland, RAF Lossiemouth and Faslane, which are vital to maintaining the security of the UK and our NATO allies.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Fines****Dan Carden:**[\[117825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to give the Civil Aviation Authority power to directly fine airlines who break consumer law.

Jesse Norman:

The Government consulted, as part of the Aviation Consumer Policy Reform Consultation in 2022, on whether the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) should be given additional administrative powers to enforce consumer protections laws. It is reviewing the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas**Helen Morgan:**[\[117982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help ensure that there is adequate bus service provision in rural areas.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government recognises the importance of transport provision in rural areas. England's long-term National Bus Strategy, "Bus Back Better", was published in March 2021, setting out a bold vision for bus services across the country.

The Strategy asked all English Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) outside London to publish Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). It asked for BSIPs to be developed in collaboration with local bus operators and cover the LTA's full area, all local bus services within it, and the differing needs of any parts of that area, such as rural elements. The Strategy also encouraged new forms of bus provision in areas that are currently not adequately served by conventional timetabled buses.

To support Local Transport Authorities to improve bus services in their areas, we are providing over £1 billion of new money to make bus services more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper. We are also providing practical assistance, including allocating a named Relationship Manager to all LTAs.

Our £20 million Rural Mobility Fund is supporting 17 innovative, demand-led minibus trials in rural and suburban areas across 15 local authorities in England. The experience gained from these pilots will help LTAs better understand how Demand Responsive Transport might best operate.

In addition, the Government is also providing £60 million to help bus operators cap single fares at £2 on services in England outside London from 1 January to 31 March 2023. Over 130 operators covering more than 4,600 routes throughout England are participating in the scheme, including in rural areas, which will help increase patronage on buses and help millions save on their regular travel costs.

■ Department for Transport: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**Emily Thornberry:**[\[114584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Jesse Norman:

The Department does not allow the purchase of alcohol using government procurement cards. Revised policy and guidance were recently published where controls were tightened to ensure correct use of Government Procurement Cards, and increased compliance checks are now being made. The Department encourages cardholders to use the appropriate procurement routes for purchasing goods and services.

■ Driving Tests**Helen Morgan:**[\[117983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the impact of driving test centre closures on the availability of driving tests in each year since 2015.

Mr Richard Holden:

Driving test capacity is based on the number of available driving tests, which relates to the numbers of driving test examiners and the number of tests that they are able to carry out per day, rather than the number of sites.

The decision to close a test centre is made if the local demand for testing can be absorbed at an existing nearby centre without reducing test capacity, cancelling tests or impacting on the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's recovery plan to reduce waiting times caused by the pandemic.

There has consequently been zero impact in terms of the availability of driving tests. The DVSA recovery plan to reduce waiting times caused by the pandemic has resulted in an additional 586,500 driving tests being made available. As of the 12th December there were over 80,000 car test slots available.

■ Train Operating Companies: Investment Income**Dan Carden:**[\[117808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 20 Dec 2022 to Question 111701 on Train Operating Companies: Investment Income, if he will publish this information with companies' names redacted.

Huw Merriman:

The Department for Transport does not intend to publish details of such payments to train operating companies with company names redacted, as ultimately values could still be attributed back to individual companies which would prejudice commercial interests.

■ Union Connectivity Review

Samantha Dixon:

[\[117903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will publish his full response to Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Review.

Mr Richard Holden:

Lord Peter Hendy's independent Union Connectivity Review, published in November 2021, considered transport connectivity across the UK. We are considering his recommendations and will publish our response as soon as practicable.

TREASURY

■ Banks: Incentives

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[117493\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of uncapping bankers bonuses on tax revenue.

Andrew Griffith:

The removal of the banker's bonus cap is a rule change being proposed by the independent Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). As such HM Treasury has not assessed the impact of removing this cap on tax revenue.

Dan Carden:

[\[117796\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 17 October 2022 to Question 61263 on Financial Services: Incentives, if he will take steps to conduct an impact assessment of the potential impacts of lifting the cap on bankers' bonuses, including on inflation rates.

Andrew Griffith:

The removal of the cap is a regulatory change being proposed by the independent Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The regulators, as part of their rule-making processes, have undertaken (and published) their assessment of how removing the cap impacts their objectives and "have regards" and this describes the expected impact on individuals' incentives.

■ Business: Investment

James Murray:

[\[117812\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Statement Tax Plan published on 23 March 2022, if he will publish a summary of the discussions he has had with businesses on investment incentives.

Victoria Atkins:

There are currently no plans to publish a summary of the engagement following the Spring Statement. Any changes to tax policy would be a matter for future Budgets

and it would not be appropriate to comment on tax measures at this stage of the policy development cycle.

■ Business: Training

James Murray: [117813]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Statement Tax Plan published 23 March 2022, if he will publish the results of Department's work on whether the current tax system is doing enough to incentivise businesses to invest in certain types of training.

Victoria Atkins:

Any changes to tax policy is a matter for future Budgets and it would not be appropriate to comment on tax measures at this stage of the policy development cycle.

■ Credit Rating

John Spellar: [117452]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the level of potential (a) inefficiencies and (b) inequalities in credit scoring systems.

Andrew Griffith:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recently published an interim report on its Credit Information Market Study, which looks at how the credit information sector is working and how it could be improved. This includes consideration of the purpose, quality and accessibility of credit information. It can be found at:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/market-studies/ms19-1-credit-information-market-study>.

The Treasury is engaging with the FCA, as well as industry and consumer groups, on the emerging findings of the Market Study.

■ Cryptoassets: Taxation

James Murray: [117815]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the House of Commons Library a summary of responses and government response to the taxation of decentralised finance involving the lending and staking of cryptoassets consultation, which closed in August 2022.

Andrew Griffith:

As you are aware, the Government ran a call for evidence on the tax treatment of decentralised finance (DeFi) lending and staking activities from 5 July to 31 August 2022. The Government will respond to the call for evidence and publish a summary of responses in due course.

■ Financial Services: Environment Protection

Alexander Stafford:

[\[117801\]](#)

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

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is clear that the value of a taxonomy rests on its credibility as a practical and useful tool for investors, companies, consumers and regulators in supporting access to sustainable finance.

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

■ High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[114563\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason his Department has decided not to uprate the threshold for the High Income Child Benefit Charge in line with inflation.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[114564\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of not uprating the threshold for the High Income Child Benefit Charge in line with inflation on families during the cost of living crisis.

John Glen:

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.

The Government considers that the HICBC threshold of £50,000 remains appropriate.

Nevertheless, on targeted support, in 2023-24, there will be an additional Cost of Living Payment of £900 for those on means-tested benefits, £300 for pensioner households, and £150 for individuals on disability benefits.

■ Insurance: Racial Discrimination

John Spellar: [\[117453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of potential trends in the level of discrimination of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the provision of insurance.

Andrew Griffith:

Under the Equality Act 2010 insurers cannot use ethnicity as a risk factor when determining the price of insurance. Insurers must treat customers fairly under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules and the FCA has powers to act against firms that fail to comply.

The Treasury met with insurance companies following the Citizens Advice report on the 'ethnicity penalty' published in March 2022 and will continue to engage with the insurance industry and the regulator on this important issue.

■ Off-payroll Working

James Murray: [\[117814\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will place in the House of Commons Library a summary of responses and Government response to the call for evidence: umbrella company market, which closed in February 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government ran the Call for Evidence on the umbrella company market to ensure it has a detailed and up to date understanding of the market. This Call for Evidence was issued jointly by HM Treasury, HMRC and BEIS. Officials in the three departments are working closely together to consider the evidence submitted and will publish the Government's response in due course.

■ Parkinson's Disease

Dan Carden: [\[117925\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the research by Parkinson's UK on the estimated additional heating costs that could be incurred by people with Parkinson's Disease in winter 2022.

John Glen:

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

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced that it will provide a further Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 in 2023/24 to people in receipt of extra-costs disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is additional to the £150 payment for recipients of

disability benefits in 2022 already announced as part of the Cost of Living package in May.

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

Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions such as Parkinson's disease will also benefit from other forms of non-means-tested support which the Government is providing to assist with household energy bills. Millions of the most vulnerable households will receive further support this year through the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme, and the £150 Council Tax rebate which will mean that all households in Council Tax bands A-D will receive a rebate; 99% of eligible households have already received this.

Furthermore, those in need of additional support may be eligible to receive further help through the discretionary Household Support Fund (HSF). The HSF aims to complement other Government support and ensure an additional avenue of support for the most vulnerable. At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced a further 12 month extension to the grant with £1bn additional funding, bringing total funding to £2.5bn. This includes Barnett funding to the Devolved Administrations.

Lastly, the Government took decisive action with the Energy Price Guarantee which limits the price suppliers can charge customers for units of gas and electricity. The Government will consult on amending the Energy Price Guarantee as soon as is feasible after April 2023 so that those who use very large volumes of energy have their state support capped, whilst the vast majority of households can continue to benefit. This consultation will also explore the best ways to ensure that vulnerable high energy users, such as those with medical requirements, are not put at risk.

Alongside this Energy Price Guarantee consultation, the Government will develop a new approach to consumer protection in relation to energy, which will apply from April 2024 onwards. The Government will work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach, including options such as social tariffs, as part of wider retail market reforms. The objectives of this new approach will be to deliver a fair deal for consumers, ensure the market is resilient and investable, and support a least-cost, flexible energy system.

■ Pension Funds: Investment

John Spellar:

[117451]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the underlying causes of concerns relating to liability driven investment funds in the

pensions industry in 2022; and what lessons his Department has learned about the operation of these funds during this period.

Andrew Griffith:

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) regulates pension schemes, and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulates UK-based asset managers that manage LDI funds which are often used by pension schemes. The Government welcomes the recent work of the UK regulators to require that LDI funds hold higher levels of resilience, following volatility in gilt markets in 2022. This work has also been welcomed, as a first step, by the Bank of England's independent Financial Policy Committee (FPC), which is responsible for identifying and addressing systemic risks to improve UK financial stability. The FPC's December 2022 Financial Stability Report (FSR), and its assessment of the vulnerabilities associated with LDI funds, was an important milestone in the ongoing lessons learned process.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Rents**

Dan Carden:

[\[117795\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of rent increases in the private rented sector on the rate of inflation.

Andrew Griffith:

Inflation statistics are published by the independent Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The latest ONS data shows that rents (including social landlord rent and private rent) contributed 0.31ppts to the annual Consumer Prices Index including occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) inflation rate in November 2022 of 9.3%.

The ONS has also published experimental statistics calculating the index of private housing rental prices in the UK. The latest data shows that private rental prices paid by tenants in the UK rose by 4.0% in the 12 months to November 2022.

■ **Trusts: Assets**

Drew Hendry:

[\[117666\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to require that assets which (a) are held by and (b) have been transferred (i) to, (ii) from and (iii) within a trust must always have a clearly defined beneficial owner.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government recognises that the vast majority of trusts are set up for legitimate reasons. However, there is also a risk that trusts can be used to conceal the beneficial ownership of assets which can facilitate money laundering.

The Trust Registration Service (TRS) is a register of the beneficial ownership of trusts. First set up in 2017, new rules introduced in 2020 extended the scope of the TRS to UK and some non-UK trusts, with some specific exclusions, regardless of

whether or not the trust is liable to pay any tax. Trustees of UK resident express trusts were required to register their trusts with the TRS by September 2022, and this information can be made available to law enforcement and other relevant parties on a case-specific basis.

The UK continues to monitor risks associated with trusts: from 16 December 2022, there are additional restrictions on providing trust services to or for the benefit of designated persons and persons connected with Russia. Providing trust services 'for the benefit of' a person includes where the person is a beneficiary, is a potential beneficiary, or may be reasonably expected to obtain a significant financial benefit from the trust or similar arrangement. These prohibitions support wider government aims for sharpening sanctions and closing loopholes which could be used to avoid sanctions.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Disability: Parking

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[114768\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of legislation requiring landlords to designate a disabled parking bay for residents who need one; and if she will make an estimate of the proportion of landlords who are meeting this requirement.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[114769\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to set criteria for a minimum number of parking bays designated for blue badge holders in (a) new and (b) existing developments.

Stuart Andrew:

When commenced, the reasonable adjustments to common parts duty under the Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act) will require landlords to make reasonable adjustments to the communal or shared areas of residential properties, when requested to do so by a qualifying disabled resident. Outdoor areas such as car parks are within the scope of the provision and therefore, if the request for a designated parking bay is reasonable, this would be a required adaptation under section 36 of the 2010 Act, once fully commenced.

The parking concessions provided under the Blue Badge Scheme only apply to on-street parking and not to off-street car parks. Currently, both local authorities and private parking operators are already required under the 2010 Act to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and to provide them equal opportunities to access services. This is an anticipatory duty and is seen in the Blue Badge Scheme and in the provision of wider bays for ease of access.

Although operators of private car parks are required to make reasonable adjustments, the form that those adjustments take is up to individual operators, who can best judge what is appropriate within their car parks.

■ Sikhs

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[114759\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Government's website entitled Ethnicity Facts and Figures, how many and what proportion of the datasets which appear on that site contain data which can be disaggregated in such a way as to provide specific information on the number of Sikhs in each category, in England and Wales.

Stuart Andrew:

According to the Office for National Statistics' latest Equalities Data Audit (Nov 2022), 22 of the data sources used on Ethnicity facts and figures collect religion data as well as ethnicity. This is 29% of all the data sources used on Ethnicity facts and figures. There are 73 datasets (pages) in Ethnicity facts and figures that use data from these sources; this is 39% of all datasets. Sample sizes for each source vary so it may not always be possible to provide reliable estimates when disaggregating data by both ethnic group and religion.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cold Weather Payments: Solihull

Julian Knight:

[\[117635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Cold Weather Payments were issued to pensioners in Solihull constituency in 2022.

Laura Trott:

The Cold Weather Payment scheme is administered at weather station level rather than at a constituency or regional level. The coverage area for each weather station is determined by the Met Office, which assesses the most appropriate weather station for each postcode area. Cold weather payments are triggered when the average temperature recorded at the weather station has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days, during the Cold Weather season (November to March)

The constituency of Solihull covers all or part of the following postcode areas: B14, B26, B27, B28, B90, B91, B92.

The above postcode areas are covered by the weather station Coleshill. Coleshill weather station covers the following postcode areas, in Table 1, which include constituencies other than Solihull.

TABLE 1 POSTCODE DISTRICTS MAPPED TO WEATHER STATIONS

Weather station	Postcode Districts Covered
Coleshill	B1-21, B23-38, B40, B42-50, B60-80, B90-98, CV1-12, CV21-23, CV31-35, CV37, CV47, DY1-14, LE10, WS1-15, WV1-16.

Qualifying individuals living in these postcode districts will have received a payment in respect of a seven-day period of Cold Weather.

We estimate that in the period 1 November 2022 to 06 January 2023 there were 95,000 payments made to Pension Credit recipients in this area as a whole. We are not able to break this figure down to a lower level.

For the 21/22 Cold Weather Payment season, running from 1 November 2021 to 31 March 2022, there were 0 Cold Weather Payment triggers for Coleshill Weather station.

■ **Cost of Living Payments and Winter Fuel Payments: Solihull**

Julian Knight:

[117637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Winter Fuel Payments and Pensioner Cost of Living Payments were awarded within the Solihull constituency.

Laura Trott:

The number of Winter Fuel Payments awarded in Solihull constituency in winter 2021 to 2022 was 20,997. Statistics for the Winter of 2022 to 2023 will be published in September 2023. A full breakdown of Winter Fuel statistics can be found here: [Winter Fuel Payment statistics for winter 2020 to 2021 and winter 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2020-to-2021-and-winter-2021-to-2022)

In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, the number of Cost of Living Payments made in specific constituencies is the subject of an upcoming statistical release, and cannot be released before that publication is ready, subject to usual quality assurance.

The Department for Work and Pensions has published management information on the total number of Cost of Living Payments made. The information which will be updated as new payments are made can be found here: [Cost of Living Payment management information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cost-of-living-payment-management-information).

■ **Cost of Living Payments: Disability**

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[117824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the cost of living support for disabled people.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 December 2022 to Question [UIN 110766](#).

Ian Byrne:

[117831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has been made on the adequacy of the Cost of Living Payments for disabled people who have higher energy usage and are not on means tested benefits.

Ian Byrne:

[117834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 8 December 2022 to Question 103036 on Cost of Living Payments: Medical Equipment, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

No such assessment has been made. However, to ensure ongoing stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement, we announced further support for next year designed to target the most vulnerable households. This cost of living support is worth £26 billion in 2023-24, in addition to uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people, as well as the basic and new State Pensions by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions, the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1%. Alongside further Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable, the amended Energy Price Guarantee will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24.

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

■ Cost of Living Payments: Medical Equipment

Ian Byrne:

[117835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 8 December 2022 to Question 103036 on Cost of Living Payments: Medical Equipment, if he will increase the Disability Cost of Living Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government is providing extensive support to disabled people and those with a health condition to help them live independent lives. In 2022/23, we will spend around £66bn on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions in Great Britain, of which over £29bn will be on the extra costs benefits payable in

England and Wales. As referenced in my answer to UIN 103036, we will also be uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people as well as the basic and new State Pensions by 10.1%.

In terms of cost of living support, and Cost of Living Payments, the Government's position is that the highest amount of cost of living support should go to those on means-tested benefits as those on the lowest incomes will be most vulnerable to rises in the cost of living.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 19 December to Question 107067 and his Department's 2021 data entitled DWP and CMG: spending over £500, for what reasons her Departments spending on purchases made with a Government Procurement Card below the value of £500 exceeds the value of spending on purchases above £500 by £36,401,197.62.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[118918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2022 to Question 107067 on Department for Work and Pensions: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, how many purchases with a value less than £500 were made against his Department's budget through a Government procurement card in 2021.

Mims Davies:

I refer the hon. Member to the amended answer given to PQ[107067](#).

■ **Employment Support Allowance: Cost of Living Payments**

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[114560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason his Department has decided that those in receipt of contribution-based Employment Support Allowance and who do not receive Universal Credit are not eligible for Cost of Living Support payments.

Mims Davies:

The Cost of Living Payment is being targeted at low income households who are in receipt of a means-tested income replacement benefit. Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance is a non means tested benefit. Non-means tested benefits are not qualifying benefits for the Cost of Living Payment in their own right because people receiving these benefits may have other financial resources available to them.

This payment comes on top of extensive Government support with the cost of living, including six million disabled people having been paid a separate £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment.

These payments are part of the government's £15bn package of support and sit alongside

- a £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment to anyone entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2022 to 2023
- the extension of the Household Support Fund with an additional £421 million to support households in England with the cost of essentials
- a £150 Council Tax rebate sent earlier this year to those in Council Tax bands A-D in England
- a £400 reduction on energy bills given to all domestic electricity customers, and The Energy Price Guarantee supporting millions of households with rising energy costs.

The guidance with the full list of support can be found at:

[Cost of living support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support)

Dame Angela Eagle:

[114561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact that excluding those in receipt of contribution-based Employment Support Allowance who do not receive Universal Credit from eligibility for the Cost of Living payment has had on the ability of affected people to meet their living costs in the context of rises in inflation.

Mims Davies:

No such assessment has been made in respect of the 2022/23 Cost of Living Payments.

Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance is a non means tested benefit. Non-means tested benefits are not qualifying benefits for the Cost of Living Payment in their own right because people receiving these benefits may have other financial resources available to them.

We will be bringing forward legislation for the 2023/24 Cost of Living Payments in due course.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[114562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has plans to extend the eligibility criteria for the Cost of Living payment to include people in receipt of contribution-based Employment Support Allowance who do not receive Universal Credit.

Mims Davies:

The Cost of Living Payment is being targeted at low income households who are in receipt of a means-tested income replacement benefit. Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance is a non means tested benefit. Non-means tested benefits are not qualifying benefits for the Cost of Living Payment in their own right because people receiving these benefits may have other financial resources available to them. We have no plans to extend the current eligibility criteria.

We will be bringing forward legislation for the 2023/24 Cost of Living Payments in due course.

■ Job Centres: Training

Sir Stephen Timms:

[117414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which topics are included in initial training for work coaches.

Guy Opperman:

Work Coaches also receive on-going learning for their roles and access to guidance which is refreshed at regular intervals.

Please see attached list of learning (Training Index) which Work Coaches undertake as part of their comprehensive learning journey to assist.

Attachments:

1. Training Index [\[Training Index.docx\]](#)

Sir Stephen Timms:

[117415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether work coaches receive training on (a) potential barriers to employment for disabled people and (b) how to support disabled jobseekers who may be experiencing such barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

Work Coach Learning equips staff with tools, knowledge, coaching skills and behaviours through a mix of topics, to enable them to support all individuals moving closer to the working environment; this is prevalent when supporting people with disabilities and overcoming barriers.

For example, within the Topic 'Claimant Commitment', learning includes how we consider the impact of the claimants' condition and their ability to work and the need to consider what work search activities they are capable of now and in the future, their barriers, any transferrable skills, and any support they are receiving or require.

Work Coaches also explore any previous work activity and discuss any local provision that can help with these needs.

In addition, the topics:

- 'Complex Needs' includes supporting claimants with a disability
- 'Assisted Digital' includes learning to support people whose circumstances make it difficult for them to use online government services, and
- 'Access to Work' provides individual practical support and advice to help overcome barriers at work. It helps people with all types of disabilities, including mental health conditions and a condition does not have to be diagnosed.

In addition there are over 500 Disability Employment advisors in job centres up and down the country.

■ Pension Credit**Sarah Olney:** **[117780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the maximum income eligibility criteria for Pension Credit in the context of the rate of inflation.

Laura Trott:

Following the conclusion of the Secretary of State's annual up-rating review and subject to Parliamentary approval, the Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit will increase by 10.1% from April 2023. This is in line with the increase in prices in the year to September 2022. It will extend CPI protection to those who rely on the Standard Minimum Guarantee in Pension Credit at a cost of £700 million above the statutory minimum requirement.

The same percentage increase will apply to the threshold for access to the Savings Credit for those who reached State Pension age before April 2016.

Sarah Olney: **[117781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish guidance on other sources of financial support for people who are not eligible for Pension Credit due to the level of their savings and live in rented homes.

Laura Trott:

The State Pension is the foundation of support for older people, providing the basis on which people can build additional private savings for their retirement. Under this Government, the full yearly amount of the basic State Pension is now over £2,300 higher than in 2010. From April 2023, this will rise to over £3,000.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and that pensioners are more likely to suffer disproportionately from adverse health effects from living in a cold home, and many low-income pensioner households do not claim the means tested benefits they are entitled to.

That is why, in 2022/23 there was a pensioner cost of living payment of £300 per household paid as a top up to the Winter Fuel Payment. On 17 November 2022 the Chancellor announced as part of his Autumn Statement a further pensioner cost of living payment of £300 per household in 2023/24.

Information on other sources of financial support to help with the cost of living available to pensioners can be found here:

<https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk>

For those who live in rented homes, information on Housing Benefit can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit>

Customers who want impartial money and pensions advice should visit:

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk>

For those who want to plan their retirement and check their State Pension:

<https://www.gov.uk/check-state-pension>

Sarah Olney:

[\[117782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made additional financial support available to pensioners who are not eligible for Pension Credit during the cost of living crisis.

Laura Trott:

The Government understands the pressures people including pensioners are facing with the cost of living and has put in place a significant package of measures. This includes 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 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.

The Government recognises the rising costs felt by all pensioners and nearly 12 million pensioners will benefit from a 10.1% increase to their State Pension payments from April 2023, under the Triple Lock.

Pensioner households have received 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.

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.

■ **Pension Credit: Kingston upon Hull North**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[117518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to help pensioners in Kingston upon Hull North constituency access (a) information about their eligibility for Pension Credit and (b) Pension Credit.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[117520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to improve the take-up of Pension Credit in Kingston upon Hull North constituency.

Laura Trott:

Pension Credit provides vital financial support to pensioners on a low income. In Kingston upon Hull North some 2,400 pensioners already receive Pension Credit, but we want all those who are eligible to claim it. That's why the Department launched a £1.2m nationwide communications campaign in April to raise awareness of Pension

Credit and increase take-up. The campaign included a whole range of activities including:

- advertising in regional and national newspapers, and on national and local broadcast radio;
- promotion of Pension Credit on social media, via internet search engines and sponsored advertising on targeted websites that pensioners, their friends and family are likely to visit;
- information screens in Post Offices and GP surgeries across GB;
- advertising on the sides of buses, interior bus panels and digital street displays; and
- leaflets and posters in Jobcentres, as well as digital versions which could be used by stakeholders and partners across local communities; and
- a second Pension Credit awareness media 'day of action' in June working in close collaboration with broadcasters, newspapers and other partners such as Age UK, Independent Age and the private sector to reach out to pensioners to promote Pension Credit through their channels

Last month we undertook a further burst of communications activity, including press and radio advertising and social media to highlight to pensioners that if they applied for Pension Credit by 18 December, it would not be too late to qualify for a £324 Cost of Living Payment – subject to Pension Credit backdating rules.

On 7 December, around 40 MPs attended a Pension Credit event at Portcullis House which I hosted. I was pleased to hear about the work that a number of MPs are already doing to help their constituents make a claim and also that others pledged to help promote Pension Credit.

In the coming weeks, DWP will write to over 11 million pensioners to notify them of the up-rating of their State Pensions. As with last year, a leaflet accompanying the notification includes information promoting Pension Credit. This has been updated to include a more prominent 'call to action' using the Pension Credit campaign messaging to encourage eligible pensioners to make a claim.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations**

Kate Osamor:

[117740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of Personal Independence Payment assessments carried out by (a) Atos and (b) Capita were found to have been of an unacceptable standard in (i) 2019-20, (ii) 2020-21 and (iii) 2021-22.

Tom Pursglove:

The proportion of Personal Independence Payment assessments carried out by Atos and Capita, that were found to have been of an unacceptable standard, are shown below:

(A) ATOS	(I) APR-19 - MAR-20	(II) APR-20 - MAR-21	(III) APR-21 - MAR-22
U grades Percentage (%)	3.8%	3.3%	3.1%
(b) Capita	(i) Apr-19 - Mar-20	(ii) Apr-20 - Mar-21	(iii) Apr-21 - Mar-22
U grades Percentage (%)	4.0%	3.2%	3.1%

Please Note:

- U grades shown are as a proportion of audited assessments carried out by Independent Audit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions;
- Only audited assessments are included in the data for this response;
- 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.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Sleep Apnoea****Rachael Maskell:****[117684]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps he has taken to encourage people with sleep apnoea to apply for the Personal Independence Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is intended to act as a contribution towards the extra costs that arise from needs related to a long-term health condition or disability. Entitlement is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from the health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself. As PIP is not based on conditions there is no specific activity to encourage people with sleep apnoea to apply for the benefit. Information on PIP, including information on who may be entitled, can be found on www.gov.uk alongside other information available to support disabled people.

■ **Unemployment: Young People****Sir Stephen Timms:****[117416]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on youth employment of the abolition of traineeships, announced on 12 December 2022.

Mims Davies:

Traineeships are not being abolished. The Department for Education has taken the decision that Traineeship provision will be integrated into 16-19 study programme and adult education provision from 1 August 2023. All the elements of the

Traineeship programme - English and Maths, work experience, employability and occupational skills, and qualifications - will continue to be funded for 16–19-year-olds as part of the national 16-19 study programme, and for adults through the adult education budget.

The DWP Youth Offer provides individually tailored Work Coach support to young people aged 16 to 24 who are in the Universal Credit Intensive Work Search group. This includes the Youth Employment Programme, Youth Employability Coaches for young people with additional employment barriers, and Youth Hubs across Great Britain, which provide young people access to enter a variety of work-related support including Sector-based Work Academy Programmes, work experience, Mentoring Circles, apprenticeships, employer engagement, careers advice and traineeships.

DWP will continue to work with national and local partners to ensure the right support is available to help young people to enter and progress in employment.

■ Universal Credit: Kingston upon Hull North

Dame Diana Johnson:

[117521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Universal Credit decisions were subject to an appeal by the claimant in 2022 in Kingston upon Hull North constituency.

Tom Pursglove:

From 01 January 2022 to 30 September 2022, there were 30 Universal Credit appeals lodged by claimants in the Kingston upon Hull North constituency.

Notes:

- All volumes have been rounded to the nearest 10;
- Appeals data taken from the DWP UC computer system's management information. This appeal data may differ from that held by His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service for various reasons such as delays in data recording and other methodological differences in collating and preparing statistics;
- Appeals data up to 30 September 2022 is in line with the latest published statistics on appeals. Claimants who have received benefit decisions more recently may not yet have had time to complete the claimant journey and progress to appeal;
- The Parliamentary Constituency geography relates to the origin of the claim (i.e. derived from claimant's postcode) rather than the location of where a tribunal is held;
- These figures are produced using internal MI, are not quality assured to Official Statistics standards, and may be subject to revision.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Higher Education Student Support

The Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon): [\[HCWS491\]](#)

I am announcing details of student fees and support arrangements for higher education students undertaking a course of study in the 2023/24 academic year starting on 1 August 2023 together with further help to address additional cost of living pressures in 2022/23. Also, I am confirming that students starting designated Higher Technical Qualifications in 2023/24 will qualify for fee loans and loans for living costs for the first time, eligibility for student finance will be extended to certain family members of those granted leave under the main Ukrainian schemes, and eligibility for family members of the Afghan schemes has been brought into line with refugees and their family members.

I can confirm today that maximum tuition fees for undergraduate students for the 2023/24 academic year in England will be maintained at the levels that apply in the 2022/23 academic year, the sixth year in succession that fees have been frozen. This means that the maximum level of tuition fees for a standard full-time course will remain at £9,250 for the 2023/24 academic year. Maximum fees will also be frozen for the 2024/25 academic year to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of higher education down.

Maximum undergraduate loans for living costs will be increased by forecast inflation, 2.8%, in 2023/24. And the same increase will apply to the maximum disabled students' allowance for students with disabilities undertaking full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in 2023/24. Maximum grants for students with child or adult dependants who are attending full-time undergraduate courses will also increase by 2.8% in 2023/24.

We are also increasing support for students undertaking postgraduate courses in 2023/24. Maximum loans for students starting master's degree and doctoral degree courses from 1 August 2023 onwards will be increased by 2.8% in 2023/24. And the same increase will apply to the maximum disabled students' allowance for postgraduate students with disabilities in 2023/24.

The Government is introducing a new type of qualification at levels 4 and 5 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework, the Higher Technical Qualification, which aims to improve the quality of technical education on offer and encourage more people to take higher technical courses which improve their employment prospects and meet employers' skills needs. I am confirming today that eligible students undertaking designated full-time and part-time Higher Technical Qualifications that have been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education will qualify for fee loans and living costs support.

I am also confirming today that home fee status, tuition fee loans and living costs support will be extended to certain family members of all persons granted leave under the Homes

for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, the Ukraine Extension Scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme. Additionally, student support and home fee status of certain family members of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be aligned with the treatment of family members of refugees, persons granted humanitarian protection and stateless leave. These changes will benefit these vulnerable students.

The Government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted students.

We have already made £261 million of student premium funding available for the 2022/23 academic year to support successful outcomes for disadvantaged students. The Department for Education has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to make clear universities can draw on this funding to boost their own hardship funds and support students in most need.

Today we are making a one-off reallocation of funding so we can add £15 million to this year's student premium, enabling extra hardship awards to be made to tens of thousands of disadvantaged students. This extra funding will complement the help universities are providing through their own, bursary, scholarship and hardship support schemes.

In addition, 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 25th 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.

Further details of the student support package for 2023/24 are set out in the attached document.

I expect to lay regulations implementing changes to student finance support for undergraduates and postgraduates for 2023/24 shortly. These regulations will be subject to Parliamentary procedure.

Attachments:

1. Higher Education Student Support: Details [[Higher Education Fees and Student Support for 2023 2024 Details.pdf](#)]