



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (04:01 P.M., 20 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

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

## ■ Rape: Prosecutions

**Emily Thornberry:****[125287]**

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) completed prosecutions and (b) convictions there have been for rape in England and Wales in each quarter from the start of January 2010 to the end of September 2022.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold any data which shows the number of defendants prosecuted for, or convicted of, the offence of rape. However, management information is held showing the number of defendants by prosecution outcome, flagged as involving offences of rape since 1st January 2010 to the end of September 2022 by quarter. The tables below show the number of completed prosecutions and convictions in rape flagged cases.

**CPS RAPE FLAGGED PROSECUTION OUTCOMES**

<b>09/10-Q4</b>	<b>10/11-Q1</b>	<b>10/11-Q2</b>	<b>10/11-Q3</b>	<b>10/11-Q4</b>	<b>11/12-Q1</b>	<b>11/12-Q2</b>	<b>11/12-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	1,014	956	1,096	1,052	1,107	955	959	965
Convictions	622	552	637	623	655	610	577	590
<b>11/12-Q4</b>	<b>12/13-Q1</b>	<b>12/13-Q2</b>	<b>12/13-Q3</b>	<b>12/13-Q4</b>	<b>13/14-Q1</b>	<b>13/14-Q2</b>	<b>13/14-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	985	939	917	938	898	991	957	938
Convictions	637	625	574	593	541	604	599	556
<b>13/14-Q4</b>	<b>14/15-Q1</b>	<b>14/15-Q2</b>	<b>14/15-Q3</b>	<b>14/15-Q4</b>	<b>15/16-Q1</b>	<b>15/16-Q2</b>	<b>15/16-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	1,005	1,050	1,120	1,202	1,165	1,167	1,219	1,150
Convictions	589	606	644	666	666	688	691	666
<b>15/16-Q4</b>	<b>16/17-Q1</b>	<b>16/17-Q2</b>	<b>16/17-Q3</b>	<b>16/17-Q4</b>	<b>17/18-Q1</b>	<b>17/18-Q2</b>	<b>17/18-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	1,108	1,390	1,283	1,256	1,265	1,120	1,151	1,159
Convictions	645	782	747	747	719	668	672	678
<b>17/18-Q4</b>	<b>18/19-Q1</b>	<b>18/19-Q2</b>	<b>18/19-Q3</b>	<b>18/19-Q4</b>	<b>19/20-Q1</b>	<b>19/20-Q2</b>	<b>19/20-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	1,098	985	814	684	561	593	505	524
Convictions	628	625	504	445	359	386	350	362
<b>19/20-Q4</b>	<b>20/21-Q1</b>	<b>20/21-Q2</b>	<b>20/21-Q3</b>	<b>20/21-Q4</b>	<b>21/22-Q1</b>	<b>21/22-Q2</b>	<b>21/22-Q3</b>	
Prosecutions	480	218	306	486	547	601	600	661
Convictions	341	174	223	336	376	398	407	467
<b>21/22-Q4</b>	<b>22/23-Q1</b>	<b>22/23-Q2</b>						
Prosecutions	675	622	517					
Convictions	461	430	320					

Data Source: CPS Case Management Information System

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****■ Business: Bristol South****Karin Smyth:**[\[121072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with businesses in Bristol South constituency on the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on those businesses.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses, including those in Bristol South constituency, and is engaging with businesses across the UK to understand these challenges and explore ways to mitigate them. The Government has reversed the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, the cut to fuel duty for 12 months and raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter. In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

A new Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) was announced on 9 January, which will mean all eligible UK businesses, including those in Bristol South, will receive a discount on high energy bills from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024.

**■ Customers: Protection****Alex Sobel:**[\[122248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with Ofgem on the adequacy of their enforcement of (a) the social obligation to offer non-financial support for customers in vulnerable situations and (b) other aspects of Supply Licence Condition 32.

**Graham Stuart:**

Under Supply Licence Condition 32, suppliers are required to submit quarterly and annual data to Ofgem on a variety of areas of their operation. This includes debt levels, disconnection rates, prepayment meters, smart meters, payment methods used by customers and help for vulnerable customers.

The information is used to review suppliers' performance in relation to specific social obligations, including areas of operation where vulnerable customers may be affected. Ofgem monitors these statistics to identify areas where improvement is needed. Ministers regularly meet with Ofgem to discuss a range of topics, including issues that have an impact on vulnerable consumers.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[119034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card in July 2022, for how many (a) individuals and (b) nights accommodation was purchased at the Grand Hotel Petersberg on 1 July 2022; and what the purpose was of the stay at that hotel.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, attended the Petersberg Summer Dialogue at the Grand Hotel Petersberg in Koenigswinter, Germany, for two nights 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[125289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 119033 on Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, how much his Department spent on purchasing goods and services with a value of less than £500 on a Government procurement card in 2021-22; and how many purchases with a value of less than £500 his Department made on a Government procurement card in 2021-22.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Department only has the value by financial year, BEIS spent £213k in 2021/22 on purchasing goods and services with a value of less than £500 on a government procurement card. The total amount was made up of 3,473 transactions however one transaction may contain number of purchases. To identify individual purchase items can only be obtained disproportionately.

## ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Written Questions

**Jessica Morden:** [\[122087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named-day written questions their Department answered on time in 2022.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Procedure Committee publishes data on departmental answering performance for Ordinary and Named Day written questions at the end of each session - <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmproced/385/report.html>

The Second Report of Session 2022-23 reports that BEIS received 2,326 ordinary written questions in the 2021-22 session, 2,032 of which (87%) were answered substantively within 5 working days; and 1,721 named day questions, 1,462 of which (85%) were answered on the named day.



## ■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Leisure and Swimming Pools

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[\[125526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 121110 on Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Leisure and Swimming Pools, if he will publish the exact calculations which were undertaken by his Department, including what data sources were used, when establishing the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme; and if he will publish the data which contributed to the decision to not include swimming pools and leisure centres in that scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

Trade and energy intensity assessments were based on ONS and BEIS data.

The firms eligible for the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme are those operating within sectors that fall above the 80th percentile for energy intensity and 60th percentile for trade intensity, and those within sectors eligible for the existing Energy Intensive Industries schemes. The full list can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1128033/230104\\_ETII\\_List\\_for\\_gov.uk.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128033/230104_ETII_List_for_gov.uk.pdf)

## ■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Museums and Galleries

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[\[125525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 121110 on Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Leisure and Swimming Pools, for what reason libraries and museums were included in the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has taken a consistent approach to identifying the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for ETII support. These thresholds have been set at sectors falling above the 80th percentile for energy intensity and 60th percentile for trade intensity, plus any sectors eligible for the existing energy compensation and exemption schemes. These thresholds were set to balance the UK's goals of delivering targeted support at lower overall cost, while capturing a broad enough share of affected companies.

## ■ Energy Bills Rebate

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[125322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on what date will local authorities receive the full scheme guidance for Government's Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding arrangements for administering the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) will be launched later this month, and local authorities will be provided with guidance ahead of this launch. The Government will also be hosting webinars ahead of the scheme launch to help provide additional information to Local Authorities on the role they will play in delivering the EBSS AF.

**Energy Performance Certificates****Bill Esterson:**[\[122448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes in fuel poverty that were upgraded from Energy Performance Certificate (a) Band D and below to (b) Band C and above due to works undertaken through Government-funded schemes in England and Wales in the period between October 2021 and October 2022.

**Bill Esterson:**[\[122449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes in fuel poverty that will be upgraded from Energy Performance Certificate (a) Band D and below to (b) B and C and above due to works undertaken through Government-funded schemes in England and Wales in the period between October 2022 and October 2023.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* BEIS estimates that up to 55% of households receiving energy efficiency measures will elevate their EPC rating from D or below to C or above in the Sustainable Warmth Scheme.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) focuses on improving social homes below EPC C up to that standard. Around 61% of target households for the SHDF are fuel poor. The SHDF Demonstrator awarded funding in 2021 to social landlords across England and Scotland, seeing up to 2,000 social homes improved. SHDF Wave 1 awarded funding for delivery from 2022 into 2023 and will see up to 20,000 social homes in England improved.

**Energy: Billing****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[124184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will obtain and publish data on the (a) number and (b) percentage of energy non-direct debit customers who pay by cash, cheque or over the phone in (i) the UK, (ii) Great Britain, (iii) England, (iv) Scotland, (v) Wales and (vi) Northern Ireland as of 1 January 2023; and if he will provide that data by (A) local authority and (B) parliamentary constituency.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department does not have access to customer or supplier data.

The regulator, Ofgem, monitors and enforces compliance with the licence obligations on suppliers. Suppliers are required to ensure that their billing and payment arrangements are effective and fair, and that any differences in price between payment methods are cost-reflective.

## ■ Energy: Meters

**Dan Carden:**

[\[124185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Leader of the House on 12 January 2023, Official Report col 716, if he will make an oral statement on forced prepayment meter installations.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* This matter was raised at BEIS oral questions on 17 January 2023.

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. This includes considerations of whether a consumer's vulnerability makes a prepayment meter a poor choice, for example where medical equipment is required, there is a child under five, or a disability make a prepayment meter unsafe. Suppliers are required to follow specific processes before switching a customer to a prepayment tariff or meter, which are monitored by Ofgem.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[125279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of households on traditional prepayment meters that have failed to redeem their Energy Bills Support Scheme vouchers for October 2022 to January 2023 before the deadline on 14 January 2023.

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[125280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the total value of remaining energy bill discount vouchers that were not redeemed by 14 January 2023 claimant deadline.

**Graham Stuart:**

As of 1 December, energy suppliers had issued 4,044,554 vouchers to customers with traditional prepayment meters, of which 2,659,344 had been redeemed. The latest data is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-support-scheme-payments-made-by-electricity-suppliers-to-customers>

Data to end December will be published shortly. Figures for January will be published next month.

Suppliers have an obligation and must evidence that they have attempted to make a minimum of three attempts by at least two different methods to contact customers who have not redeemed their voucher. Replacement vouchers can be issued but must be redeemed by the 30 June 2023.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[125467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish proposals to tackle the enforced installation of energy prepayment meters; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department meets regularly with Ofgem and energy suppliers to discuss energy retail market issues. As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in the House, officials are working on measures to support PPM consumers and we will act as soon as possible to tackle this issue.

## ■ Energy: Prices

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[124180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his most recent estimate is of (a) the average standard charge for energy customers and (b) the amount by which that charge has risen over the last 12 months.

**Graham Stuart:**

According to recent data, the overall average fixed costs for standard electricity was £88.57 per year in 2021. This increased to £144.62 per year in 2022.

For more information, please follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics>

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[124182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with (a) Ofgem, (b) energy companies, (c) consumer organisations, (d) organisations advocating against fuel poverty, (e) organisations which advocate on behalf of older people and (f) other relevant stakeholders on setting a limit to the extra charges, in addition to the regular bill, which can be levied by energy companies on the bills of non-direct debit customers who pay by cash, cheque or over the phone.

**Graham Stuart:**

Ministers and officials regularly meet with a wide range of organisations on issues relating to the energy retail market.

Suppliers incur additional costs when serving standard credit customers compared to direct debit customers, for example through additional working capital costs and administrative costs. Rules set by Ofgem mean suppliers can only charge more for one payment method than another if the price differential is cost reflective.

There are different cap levels for customers using different payment methods. This is calculated by Ofgem applying different 'payment method uplifts' to the benchmark of how much it costs a supplier to supply energy.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[125253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the extent to which regional differences in the energy price cap accurately reflect the variation in energy distribution costs between regions.

**Graham Stuart:**

There are no plans for an assessment. Ofgem, as the independent regulator, is responsible for the operation of the price cap.

Electricity and gas distribution charges, which are incurred by suppliers and passed through to consumers, vary regionally. These variations reflect the costs of maintaining and upgrading the distribution network in a specific area and the number of consumers between whom those costs are spread. This cost reflective approach helps to minimise overall network costs across Great Britain by ensuring that each network company has to account to its local stakeholders for the costs it has incurred.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[125254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of equalising energy standing charges across regions of the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

The standing charge reflects the ongoing costs that fall on energy suppliers to provide and maintain a live supply, regardless of a consumer's usage. One component of these costs relates to distribution. It costs more to distribute electricity to some regions than others, therefore there are regional variations in standing charges to reflect higher costs to serve.

Under the Energy Price Guarantee, average standing charges for customers on default tariffs remain capped in line with the levels set by Ofgem.

## ■ EU Grants and Loans

**Lisa Nandy:** [\[123925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding the UK has (a) received and (b) is due to receive from the EU Structural Fund in the period from 31 January 2020 to 31 December 2023.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* The UK will participate in European Structural & Investment (ESI) Fund programmes (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and EMFF 2014-2020), until the end of December 2023 in relation to commitments made before the end of the transition period. The UK is allocated and therefore due to receive a total of €16.4bn to be spent by 31st December 2023.

These allocations are published in the EU Structural and Investment Funds: UK Partnership Agreement – Part 1, Sections 1 and 2 (Revised 31 January 2020) (Table 1.6). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-uk-partnership-agreement>

## ■ Fireworks: Regulation

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[123855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what powers exist for local authorities to restrict the use of fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* The Government recognises that people want to enjoy fireworks while reducing the risks and disturbances to individuals, animals and property. The majority of individuals who use fireworks do so in a responsible and safe manner.

Enforcement powers exist for local authorities to take action when fireworks are unsafe, sold illegally or misused. Local authorities and the police also have powers to tackle anti-social behaviour caused by the misuse of fireworks. It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers, based on their specific circumstances.

## ■ Fuel Poverty: Voucher Schemes

**Kenny MacAskil:**

[\[122503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of people eligible for fuel vouchers have taken them up in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK in the latest period for which data is available.

**Graham Stuart:**

*[Holding answer 18 January 2023]:* By 1 December 2022, 99% of vouchers had been issued to customers with traditional prepayment meters under the Energy Bills Support Scheme, and 66% had been redeemed. Vouchers are valid for three months and so the Government expects this figure to rise. The Government has not yet published geographical data. Data covering December will be published shortly. Monthly updates can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-support-scheme-payments-made-by-electricity-suppliers-to-customers>.

## ■ Housing: Insulation

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[119973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been allocated to home insulation and retrofit measures in each financial year since 2019.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government provides funding for home insulation and retrofit measures through the Home Upgrade Grant, Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and previously the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. The most recent allocations for these schemes is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Attachment to PQ 119973 [Attachment to 119973.pdf]

## ■ Housing: Repairs and Maintenance

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[120199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding the Government has provided on home insulation and retrofit measures since the last general election.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government provides funding for home insulation and retrofit measures through the Home Upgrade Grant, Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and previously the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme. The most recent allocations for these schemes is attached.

**Attachments:**

1. Attachment to PQ 120199 [Attachment to 120199.pdf]

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**John Penrose:** [\[120924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy when he plans to reply to the letters of 10 November and 14 December 2022 from the hon. Member for Weston-Super-Mare on behalf his constituent, Mr Martin Hodgson.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

My hon Friend, the Minister for Energy and Climate (Graham Stuart), wrote to my hon Friend on 13 January about the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

**Bill Esterson:** [\[125328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will respond to the correspondence of 13 January 2023 from the hon. Member for Sefton Central on the UK steel Industry.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

This Department aims to reply to all Ministerial correspondence within 15 working days. The letter in question was received 13 January, a response will be issued shortly.

**Ms Marie Rimmer:** [\[125398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will respond to the correspondence of 12 December 2022 from the hon. Member for St Helens South and Whiston on energy intensive businesses that purchased oil before the natural gas price cap was introduced.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

I wrote to the hon. Member on 19 January about energy intensive businesses that purchased oil before the natural gas price cap was introduced.

## ■ Nuclear Power: Cumbria

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[125513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of the nuclear energy sector in Cumbria.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department directly funds or has contracts with a number of nuclear establishments in Cumbria, including the National Nuclear Laboratory and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). A recent report found that NDA's subsidiaries Sellafield Ltd and Nuclear Waste Services' core sites in Cumbria contributed £1.3bn GVA across the local economy and supported 21,650 jobs.

The Government is taking action to support the development of the UK nuclear sector and has committed to setting up Great British Nuclear, which will be tasked with developing a resilient pipeline of new build projects. The Government is investing in nuclear, including through backing Sizewell C with £700 million, the launch of the Future Nuclear Enabling Fund and the Nuclear Fuel Fund.

## ■ Nuclear Reactors

**Dr Neil Hudson:**

[\[125515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of small modular nuclear reactors in the UK.

**Graham Stuart:**

Small Modular Reactors could have an important role to play in the UK energy system as the UK transitions to net zero by 2050.

The Government has awarded £210m to support development of the Rolls Royce Small Modular Reactor (SMR) design. The Rolls-Royce SMR entered the Generic Design Assessment process in April becoming the first SMR to begin UK nuclear regulation.

As outlined in the British Energy Security Strategy, the Government intends to initiate a selection process in 2023 for the next nuclear projects, including SMRs.

## ■ Postal Services: Finance

**Tracey Crouch:**

[\[120955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions the Government has had with Ofcom on the financial sustainability of (a) Royal Mail and (b) the Universal Postal Services Order.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Ministers and officials meet with Ofcom regularly to discuss a range of issues in relation to its role as the regulatory authority for the postal sector, including the provision of the universal service obligation.



Ofcom, as the independent regulator for the postal sector, has a duty to ensure the provision of a financially sustainable and efficient universal postal service. Ofcom publishes an annual report summarising its monitoring programme on its website ([www.ofcom.org.uk/postal-services/information-for-the-postal-industry/monitoring-reports](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/postal-services/information-for-the-postal-industry/monitoring-reports)).

## ■ Postal Services: Standards

**Sarah Olney:** [\[121082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Ofcom on the impact of letter delivery delays on (a) vulnerable consumers and (b) small businesses.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Ministers and officials meet with Ofcom regularly to discuss a range of issues in relation to its role as the regulatory authority for the postal sector, including the overall provision of the universal service obligation.

## ■ Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation

**Tracey Crouch:** [\[120954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to amend the minimum requirements in the Postal Services Act 2011 to allow Royal Mail to move to a five day letter service.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government currently has no plans to change the minimum requirements of the universal postal service which are set out in the Postal Services Act 2011.

## ■ Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

**Bill Esterson:** [\[125329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Question 107106, which region received the most funding for projects from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

The region that has been awarded the highest value of funding to date through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is Greater London. Lists of projects awarded funding through the scheme, categorised by region, can be found on the Scheme's gov.uk page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-sector-decarbonisation-scheme>

## ■ Renewable Energy: Prices

**Hywel Williams:** [\[125260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has taken steps to decouple the cost of renewable energy from gas prices, including through Contracts for Difference.

**Graham Stuart:**

Contracts for Difference are the main support mechanism for new low-carbon generation in Great Britain. They guarantee a fixed 'strike price' for renewable generators on the scheme, which decouples their costs from gas prices as their revenue is not impacted by wholesale market changes.

The Review of Electricity Market Arrangements is considering how the broader role of gas as a price setter for renewable energy could be reduced. This includes examining reforms that accelerate low-carbon deployment, so that gas sets the price of electricity for shorter periods, as well as wholesale market reform options that ensure lowest overall costs.

## ■ Royal Mail: Ofcom

**Sarah Olney:** [\[121081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of Ofcom's regulatory powers to hold Royal Mail to account.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Section 54 and Schedule 7 of the Postal Services Act 2011 give Ofcom robust powers to enforce the regulatory requirements it has imposed on Royal Mail and other postal service providers, including instituting court proceedings or imposing financial penalties where appropriate.

## ■ Royal Mail: Standards

**Sarah Olney:** [\[121083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the appropriateness of Ofcom's month-long suspension of Royal Mail's quality of service targets.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

As the independent regulator, it is for Ofcom to explain the decisions it takes on the regulatory framework.

In its 2022 review of postal regulation, Ofcom decided to retain Royal Mail's exemption from meeting performance targets during the Christmas period as it considered that its current approach remained appropriate. In coming to its decision, Ofcom carefully considered consultation responses including from consumer bodies but reserves the right to propose further action in this area if necessary.

Ofcom considers Royal Mail's performance against its quality of service targets and will continue to closely monitor performance for 2022-23 which it has been clear should no longer be impacted by Covid-19.

#### ■ **Small Business Commissioner**

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[121027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of business (a) awareness of and (b) satisfaction with the Office of the Small Business Commissioner.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) has been extremely active in highlighting late and other poor payment practices experienced by small businesses and has recovered over £8 million owed to small businesses.

A statutory review of the OSBC will take place between now and the spring. This will examine the role and remit of the OSBC to ensure that it is supporting small businesses as effectively as possible.

#### ■ **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund**

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[121095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating the money remaining in the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in a non-competitive way via local authorities with the aim of maximising uptake of the scheme.

**Graham Stuart:**

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social homes. Grant funding allocated to SHDF has totalled over £1bn.

In the Autumn Statement, the Government announced £6 billion of new Government funding that will be made available from 2025 to 2028 for energy efficiency. The design of future waves of the SHDF will consider all relevant options to ensure effective delivery.

#### ■ **Strikes**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[120998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring that the Government hold discussions with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service before applying the provisions of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

This Government has been clear that it does not want to use this legislation in a service area unless it has to.

The legislation is also clear that before making regulations setting out what is an appropriate minimum level of service in a particular area the Secretary of State must consult such persons as they consider appropriate.

**■ Strikes: Trade Unions****Rachael Maskell:**[\[120996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the potential impact of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill on union members undertaking sustained periods of (a) work to rule and (b) other action short of a strike.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

The Government is currently finalising the impact assessment for Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill and intends to publish this shortly.

**■ Trade Unions: Industrial Disputes****Rachael Maskell:**[\[120997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to negotiate with trade unions who have balloted for industrial action.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

It is up to unions to negotiate with employers, we encourage them to do so. Strikes should always be a last resort. In relation to disputes in the public sector, the Government has reached out to the relevant trade unions to invite them to discuss how to end disputes and agree fair and affordable pay settlements for 2023 to 2024.

**■ Utilities: Telephone Services****Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[125428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring energy companies to provide freephone customer helplines; and whether he (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions with energy companies on the provision of freephone customer helplines.

**Graham Stuart:**

Domestic customers should be able to access their energy supplier's telephone customer services easily and without high call charges by offering freephone or low-cost geographic numbers. The decision to provide a freephone number is a commercial matter for individual companies and there are no plans to discuss this matter. Energy suppliers who have signed up to Energy UK's Vulnerability Commitment must have a freephone number for consumers who are in debt. Some

also have a designated freephone line for prepayment meter and Priority Service customers.

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Cybersecurity

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[120970\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on the UK's cyber security strategy since COP27; and if he will make a statement.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The government continues to make progress on a wide range of commitments in the National Cyber Strategy 2022. This includes maintaining our focus on the heightened cyber threat linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and working to raise levels of cyber resilience, particularly across government and our critical national infrastructure. In November the government confirmed that the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations will be strengthened to protect essential and digital services against increasingly sophisticated and frequent cyber attacks both now and in the future.

In line with our 'whole of society' approach to implementing the Strategy, we have established the National Cyber Advisory Board. Co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Chief Information Officer at Lloyds Banking Group, Sharon Barber, the Board ensures that senior leaders from the private and third sectors challenge, support and inform the UK's strategic approach to cyber.

### ■ Defence: Public Appointments

**John Healey:**

[\[122052\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has appointed a Defence Industrial Adviser.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Defence Industrial Adviser was a temporary role appointed in September 2022 which came to an end in December last year, and which was created under the previous administration. As planned, the responsibilities have reverted back to the previous office holders.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Air Force: Training

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[120876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Next Generation Operational Training programme is a Category A programme.

**Alex Chalk:**

The categorisation of the projects contained within the Next Generation Operational Training portfolio has not yet been determined because the projects are not yet sufficiently mature to be able to state the size of the portfolio (except Gladiator which is a Cat B and Future Air Combat Manoeuvring Instrumentation System which is a Cat C).

**■ Ajax Lessons Learned Review****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[125271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time staff will be required by the Ajax Lessons Learned Review; and if he will provide a breakdown of the roles of those staff.

**Alex Chalk:**

Clive Sheldon KC was appointed to lead the independent Ajax Lessons Learned Review on 19 May 2022. He is supported by another barrister to conduct the Review. A Ministry of Defence Civil Servant has been appointed full time as Review Secretary.

**■ Armed Forces: Housing****John Healey:**[\[122424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January to Question 118858 on Armed Forces: Housing, how Pinnacle Group categorise call data cases of burst (a) pipes and (b) tanks.

**Alex Chalk:**

Pinnacle use a diagnostic system to identify what trade each job requires, for example, a plumber or electrician, and the priority category of the job (emergency, urgent or routine).

Call data held by Pinnacle is not categorised specifically by either burst pipes or burst tanks. Such calls would usually be categorised as plumbing tasks based on the trade required to attend. The priority category would be determined by the impact of the problem, including the scale and nature of likely damage, whether or not the problem can be isolated by the family, and the degree of hardship or inconvenience the family would suffer until the fault could be repaired.

**Samantha Dixon:**[\[124121\]](#)

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

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 12 January 2023 to Question 117844 to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi).

**Attachments:**

1. Armed Forces: Housing [UIN 117844.docx]

**John Healey:**[\[125247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 118857 on Armed Forces: Housing, what estimate he has made of the cost to his Department of upgrading all Service Family Accommodation to an EPC rating of C or above before the new minimum EPC rating regulations come into effect.

**Alex Chalk:**

As at 10 January 2023, there are 47,942 Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties. Of these, 23,287 have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C and above.

The cost to upgrade all Service Family Accommodation to an EPC rating of C or above has been estimated at approximately £1.2 billion. This is based on an average cost of £48,000 per home.

## ■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[123868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much spent on (a) maintenance and (b) sustainment of the Bulldog FV432 in each of the last five years..

**Alex Chalk:**

The total expenditure for maintenance of Bulldog FV432, excluding resourcing cost, for the last five financial years (FY) is provided in the table below.

### BULLDOG FV432 MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURE

FY 2021 – 2022	£3,334,592
FY 2020 – 2021	£5,882,652
FY 2019 – 2020	£3,842,387
FY 2018 - 2019	£3,266,000
FY 2017 - 2018	£3,117,000

The total expenditure for sustainment of Bulldog FV432, excluding resourcing cost, for the last five financial years is provided in the table below.

### BULLDOG FV432 SUSTAINMENT EXPENDITURE

FY 2021 – 2022	£2,661,260
FY 2020 – 2021	£1,995,541
FY 2019 – 2020	£4,524,956
FY 2018 - 2019	£2,487,052

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**BULLDOG FV432 SUSTAINMENT EXPENDITURE**

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FY 2017 - 2018 £3,683,000

**■ Artillery: Procurement**

**John Healey:** [\[125251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral statement of 16 January 2023 on Ukraine: Update, Official Report, column 36, in what year he plans to deliver the mobile fires programme.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Mobile Fires Platform project is currently in the latter stages of the Concept Phase and has conducted significant operational analysis and market engagement to identify and assess viable investment options against the endorsed Army/MoD requirement.

In line with the Defence Secretary's announcement to the House on 16 January, the Mobile Fires Programme will be accelerated for delivery within this decade.

**■ AUKUS**

**John Healey:** [\[122051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which Minister in his Department is responsible for AUKUS.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I am the responsible minister for AUKUS activity within the Ministry of Defence and am supported by the Permanent Secretary as the Defence accounting officer and cross Government SRO, as well as Director General Nuclear and Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Financial and Military Capability).

**■ Challenger Tanks**

**John Healey:** [\[125250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his oral statement of 16 January 2023 on Ukraine: Update, Official Report column 36, when he plans to complete the review of the number of Challenger 3 tank conversions.

**Alex Chalk:**

As announced by the Secretary of State on 16 January 2023, the numbers of Challenger 3 Main Battle Tanks will be reviewed as a matter of priority following lessons learned from Ukraine, and to ensure the Army's Main Battle Tank fleet remains sufficient to meet Defence's needs.



**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[125276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Challenger 3 upgrade will include improvements to the (a) suspension and (b) gearbox.

**Alex Chalk:**

The current Hydrogas suspension units will be replaced with the latest '3rd Generation' Hydrogas system.

The transmission that will be fitted to CR3 remains largely unchanged from that fitted to CR2. It will continue with its iterative modification programme to address obsolescence and improve reliability.

#### ■ **Defence Infrastructure Organisation: Anti-social Behaviour**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[123869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he has taken to prevent anti-social behaviour on land owned by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

**Alex Chalk:**

Every year, large numbers of people enjoy access to the Defence estate legally and safely. To enable this, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) provides guidance on the location of accessible sites, firing times and military byelaws. The safety of defence assets, personnel and members of the public who use and access these sites is taken very seriously. The Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) are deployed at Defence locations across the UK. Where they are deployed, the MDP works with MOD colleagues and Home Office police forces to protect the public and enforce the law to deter criminal behaviour.

#### ■ **Defence Infrastructure Organisation: Hunting**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[120887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many reports of licensed hunts chasing (a) foxes, (b) deer, (c) hares and (d) other animals on land owned by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation his Department has received in each of the last five years.

**Alex Chalk:**

This information is not held.

#### ■ **Defence: Research**

**John Healey:** [\[122425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much has been spent on defence Research and Development since 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Department tracks Research and Development by financial year (FY) rather than calendar year and are published in its Annual Reports and Accounts.

The latest information relates to FY2021-22, in which the Department recorded a research and development spend of £1.836 billion.

### ■ National Cyber Force

**John Healey:** [\[122426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the National Cyber Force is fully operational; and how many staff it has.

**James Heappey:**

We cannot comment on exact figures regarding staff numbers or operational capability for national security reasons. However, the National Cyber Force (NCF) is made up of a roughly equal share of personnel from Defence and the UK intelligence community. The NCF is investing in our military and civilian recruitment, including our recruitment pipelines, by creating dedicated cyber career pathways to build a world class workforce and are investing to scale up the NCF, constructing a new headquarters in Samlesbury.

### ■ National Security: Cybersecurity

**John Healey:** [\[120869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 September to Question 49570 on National Security: Cybersecurity, when the Concept Phase for the Joint Crypt Key Programme (JCKP) ended.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Joint Crypt Key Programme is formed of a series of components, each proceeding at different stages of the acquisition cycle. The concept phase referred to in question 49570 was for the Crypto Enabling Services component. This ended in June 2016.

**John Healey:** [\[120873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions has he personally had with the Foreign Secretary on the ongoing development of the Joint Crypt Key Programme.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Joint Crypt Key Programme (JCKP) is a £2.6 billion critical programme for Defence that protects our people, platforms, networks and information by providing high grade cryptography to a range of mission-critical services. I regularly meet with the Foreign Secretary on numerous topics. For further information on the Joint Crypt Key Programme, I would be happy to offer the right hon. Member a briefing at a higher classification.

**John Healey:** [\[122046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Infrastructure and Projects Authority assessment grade was for the Joint Crypt Key Programme in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

I am withholding this information as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

**■ Nuclear Weapons****Mark Pritchard:**[\[125292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will revise the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy to reflect trends in the level of nuclear threats to the UK.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) has reinforced the need to consider industry as a capability in its own right, and ensure closer and earlier dialogue with industry. DSIS set out in detail where there is a strategic imperative for industrial capabilities to reside in the UK, including those capabilities relating to nuclear warheads and submarines, and the Government has already committed to a once-in-two-generations programme to modernise our nuclear forces.

We will review the DSIS alongside the Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper refresh and will decide as part of that process whether a new publication is warranted.

**■ Type 26 Frigates: Iron and Steel****John Healey:**[\[122420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether steel has been ordered for Batch 2 of the Type 26 frigates.

**Alex Chalk:**

Steel for the first of the Type 26 Batch 2 ships was ordered together with the steel for the Batch 1 ships. Orders for steel have not yet been placed for any of the subsequent Batch 2 ships. In common with other large defence programmes, further orders will be placed in due course.

Responsibility for sourcing steel for the Type 26 Batch 2 frigates rests with BAE Systems the prime contractor, who make their steel requirements known to the UK steel industry and procure the steel in accordance with Cabinet Office guidelines.

**■ Type 32 Frigates****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[123870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department remains committed to the Type 32 frigate.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Type 32 Frigate programme remains a key part of the future fleet and is currently in the concept phase. Work continues to ensure the programme is affordable.

**■ Ukraine: Armoured Fighting Vehicles****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[125274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Bulldog chassis sent to Ukraine were first manufactured.

**Alex Chalk:**

The date of manufacture of the Bulldog chassis transferred to Ukraine ranges from between 1965 – 1969.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Antisemitism: Internet****Chi Onwurah:**[\[120114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking with stakeholders to help take anti-Semitic conspiracy theories (a) on social media and (b) elsewhere online.

**Paul Scully:**

The Online Safety Bill will apply to all companies that allow users to post content online or to interact with each other, as well as search services.

All companies in scope of the Bill will have duties to proactively tackle priority illegal content, including illegal anti-semitic content, and will need to prevent their services from being used to facilitate or commission these offences. They will also be required to swiftly remove other illegal content where there is a victim and it is flagged to them. In addition, Category 1 Service, which will include the largest social media companies, will need to ensure they properly enforce their terms of service, and provide adult users with tools to help them avoid content that is abusive or incites hatred on the basis of religion.

This means that the Bill will offer adult users a 'triple shield' of protection against anti-semitic content. Firstly, regulated services will need to take robust action against such content where it meets a criminal threshold. Secondly, Category 1 services will be required to take down anti-semitic content that is in breach of their own terms of service, and third, they must provide adults with greater controls over content they may not wish to see, reducing the risk that they encounter anti-semitic content.

Finally, the Online Safety Bill will require all services which are likely to be accessed by children to provide safety measures for child users. Those safety measures will need to protect children from inappropriate and harmful content and activity, including anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

## ■ Companies: ICT

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[125340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the ease by which companies and organisations can switch from legacy IT infrastructure to cloud-based services and providers; and whether she is taking steps to help ensure the portability of data in such transitions.

**Julia Lopez:**

As outlined in the National Data Strategy, the Government is committed to unlocking the value of data in the economy. The development and increased adoption of standards, such as for data formats and Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), is key to increasing data interoperability and innovation. We are working with a range of partners such as the British Standards Institute, Open Data Institute to support businesses to ensure that data is findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable.

## ■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Written Questions

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[122088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named-day written questions their Department answered on time in 2022.

**Julia Lopez:**

The House of Commons Procedure Committee publishes statistics on Written Parliamentary Questions (WPs) on a sessional basis, with the most recent data on departmental answering performance [published in July 2022](#). The Procedure Committee's most recent report on performance notes that, in the 2021-22 session of Parliament, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) answered 91% of ordinary questions, and 90% of named day questions, on time.

Data provided by the House of Commons Table Office shows that between 4 January and 26 April 2022, DCMS answered 90% of ordinary WPs, and 89% of named day WPs, on time. Between 10 May and 21 July 2022, these figures were 81% and 89% respectively.

Statistics for the remainder of 2022 have not yet been provided by the Table Office.

## ■ Events Industry

**Ruth Cadbury:**

[\[120069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to support business events organisers based in (a) Europe and (b) other countries who wish to engage with the UK business events sector.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Government is taking a number of steps to promote the UK's strong business events offer to the international market. VisitBritain supports organisations in hosting

international business events in the UK through their Business Events Growth Programme, which has awarded over £1.5m in grants since 2016. VisitEngland also facilitates meetings between English cities and key international markets throughout the year at international trade shows such as IMEX Frankfurt and IBTM World in Barcelona.

Business events are hugely valuable to our economy, contributing over £31 billion a year in spend and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. They promote our leading growth sectors to the world while attracting international visitors to all corners of the UK.

We continue to engage with the sector, including through the Tourism Industry Council and the Events Industry Board Working Group, to assess how we can further strengthen the UK's reputation as a leading business events destination.

## ■ Magazine Press

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[120131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the economic contribution of the magazine publishing sector to the economy.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government greatly values the UK's publishing sector, of which magazine publishers form a key part. The sector is a UK success story and a significant soft power asset.

Specialist publishing remains an integral part of the media industry, worth £3.74 billion to the UK economy, employing around 55,000 people. The Government recognises the role that specialist interest publications play within the UK's media ecosystem, and the demand for the specialist insights they provide, with more than 40 million adults in the UK reading a magazine every month.

## ■ Music Venues: Government Assistance

**John Nicolson:** [\[120052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to support (a) Backstage At The Green in Ochil and South Perthshire constituency and (b) other grassroots music venues.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government values the strong contribution of grassroots music venues as centres of research and development for the UK's world leading music industry.

As a devolved policy, the Devolved Administrations receive funding for culture through the Barnett formula. It is for the Scottish Government to decide how to allocate these resources across all its devolved responsibilities.

Support in England is provided for grassroots music venues through Arts Council England (ACE). ACE's Supporting Grassroots Live Music fund provides a ring-fenced

£1.5m to eligible venues (accepting applications for between £1000 and £40,000) and has been extended until 31 March 2023.

DCMS supported culture (including grassroots music) during Covid-19 through the unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund (CRF). As part of this package, funding was included for the Devolved Administrations through the Barnett formula. In England, the CRF provided immediate assistance to prevent 136 of our most loved and enduring grassroots music venues closing their doors for good.

In addition, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme has provided support to all businesses across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including grassroots music venues, protecting all non-domestic consumers from soaring energy costs, cutting the cost of power bills and providing them with the certainty they needed to plan through the acute crisis this winter.

## ■ **Tourism: EU Nationals**

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[125257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to promote British holiday destinations to tourists from the EU.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The government promotes Britain as a holiday destination to tourists from the EU through VisitBritain, the national tourist board. VisitBritain is active in a number of EU countries with in-market teams based in offices in Berlin, Amsterdam, Madrid, Milan, Paris, and Stockholm.

In February, VisitBritain is launching GREAT's 'See Things Differently' tourism campaign in France, Germany, and Spain with the aim of demonstrating a welcoming, dynamic and diverse story of Britain.

Later this month, VisitBritain is hosting educational trips for international trade buyers across Britain. The delegations include trade buyers from France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, and Spain.

VisitBritain also leads ongoing engagement with the travel trade in Europe, including tour operators and agents, to increase bookable Britain products and promote their sales. This is done via destination training activities such as webinars, and the organisation of sales events in European markets to connect UK tourism businesses with European buyers.

VisitBritain also undertakes year-round engagement with targeted media outlets in EU markets to pitch stories, as well as a year-round programme of blogger/influencers trips to all parts of Britain, aligned to priority messages and themes.

**EDUCATION****■ Apprentices****Jim Shannon:**[\[120963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to support pre-apprenticeship programmes following the decision to close the national traineeship programme.

**Robert Halfon:**

As part of the government's commitment to provide a comprehensive and clear skills offer for employers and individuals, it has been decided to integrate the traineeship programme into 16 to 19 study programmes and adult education provision from 1 August 2023.

All the elements of the traineeship programme, such as English and maths, work experience, employability and occupational skills, and qualifications, will continue to be funded for 16 to 19-year-olds as part of the national 16 to 19 study programme, and for adults through the adult education budget. This means that providers with access to funding can continue to offer traineeship type programmes for young people who need support to get into work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

The government will also continue to support young people to get the skills they need for apprenticeships or other employment through government-funded programmes, such as T Levels and the T Level transition programme, Bootcamps, and Sector-Based Work Academies. The new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is also raising awareness of apprenticeships which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education.

**Richard Graham:**[\[122121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprenticeships began in (a) Gloucester, (b) Gloucestershire, (c) the South West and (d) England in each year between 2009 and 2022.

**Richard Graham:**[\[122122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many apprentices did not complete their apprenticeship in full in (a) Gloucester constituency, (b) Gloucestershire, (c) the South West and (d) England in each year between 2009 and 2022.

**Robert Halfon:**

Apprenticeship starts and achievements for the requested geographies are presented in the attached table. Apprenticeship achievements correspond to the volume of apprenticeship programmes that are successfully completed.

Please note that apprenticeship starts and achievements within an academic year cannot be used to infer the proportion of apprenticeships that are achieved. They are independent performance metrics. Typically, apprenticeships are achieved in a subsequent academic year to the one they started in.



**Attachments:**

1. Apprenticeship Starts Table [122121 122122 apprenticeship starts table.xlsx]

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[122231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to support pre-apprenticeship programmes following the decision to close the national traineeship programme.

**Robert Halfon:**

As part of the government's commitment to provide a comprehensive and clear skills offer for employers and individuals, the department has decided to integrate the traineeship programme into the 16 to 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 to 19-year-olds as part of the national 16 to 19 study programme, and for adults through the adult education budget. This means that providers with access to funding can continue to offer traineeship type programmes for young people who need support to get into work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

The department will also continue to support young people to get the skills they need for apprenticeships or other employment through government-funded programmes such as T levels and the T level transition programme, Bootcamps, and Sector-Based Work Academies. The new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is also raising awareness of apprenticeships which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education.

**Stephen Morgan:**[\[122232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to encourage employers to take on apprentices between the ages of 16 and 24.

**Robert Halfon:**

In the 2021/22 academic year, there were 183,850 apprenticeship starts by those aged under 25. This represents 52.6% of all starts and is an increase of 15% when compared with the 2020/21 academic year.

The department wants to see more young people undertaking and benefiting from high-quality apprenticeships. The government is increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by the 2024/25 financial year to support more employers across the country to offer new apprenticeship opportunities. As part of this, we continue to provide £1,000 payments to both employers and training providers when they take on apprentices aged under 19, or 19 to 24, who have an Education, Health and Care Plan or have been in care.

The department recognises the important role that small and medium-sized employers (SMEs) play in creating apprenticeship opportunities, particularly for young people and those in disadvantaged areas. We contribute 95% of the cost of training and assessment for SMEs who do not pay the apprenticeship levy for up to 10

apprentices a year, and we fund 100% of the training and assessment costs for the smallest employers when they take on apprentices aged 16 to 18.

We are also supporting young people in schools and colleges to consider apprenticeships through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge programme. This free service provides resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships by giving them up-to-date information on the options available. In addition, the new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is raising awareness of apprenticeships which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education

### ■ Apprentices and Further Education: Inflation

**Emma Hardy:** [121151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has undertaken research into the impact of level of inflation on the incomes of (a) parents with 16-19 year olds in full-time further education, (b) adults in part-time further education and (c) post-16 apprentices.

**Emma Hardy:** [121152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has he made of the impact of inflation on the average incomes of (a) parents supporting 16 to 19 year olds in full-time (i) further education colleges and (ii) school sixth forms, (b) adults in part-time further education and (c) post-16 apprentices; and whether his Department is taking steps to help mitigate the impact of inflation on these groups.

**Emma Hardy:** [121153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Office for National Statistics publication entitled Cost of living and higher education students, England: 24 October to 7 November 2022, published on 23 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of conducting research into the effect of the cost of living on further education students.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department has carried out research in these areas. We have collected survey data on the impact of rising cost of living on households, including whether parents have cut back on household costs to fund education-related costs, and whether affordability has impacted their child's participation in educational activities in the 2021/22 academic year. This data relates to parents of secondary school pupils in England, but those who responded to the survey could also be parents of learners in further education. The same surveys also asked pupils and learners in post-16 education in classroom settings in England about some facets of cost of living, in particular whether the rising cost of living has led to those pupils and learners changing their plans for education or training.

The survey data from the 2021/22 academic year has been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parent-pupil-and-learner-panel-omnibus->

[surveys-for-2021-to-2022](#). The department intends to collect similar data for the 2022/23 academic year and we will publish this data in due course.

The government appreciates the difficulties caused by the rising cost of living and inflation, and is focused on levelling up so that young people and adults, regardless of their background or geographic location, can get the skills and training they need to secure rewarding, well-paid jobs and move up the ladder of opportunity.

The department provides a number of financial support programmes for those students who need the most help with the costs associated with staying in post-16 education. This includes extra funding to providers for disadvantaged students aged 16 to 19 with low prior attainment, or those who live in the most disadvantaged areas. In addition, the 16 to 19 bursary fund targets support towards young people who need the most help with education-related costs. In the 2022/23 academic year the department is providing £164 million to help financially disadvantaged students participate in post-16 education to cover such costs as travel, meals, books and course equipment, and over £31 million for free meals.

The department also provided over £550 million in the 2021/22 academic year to enable providers of 16 to 19 education to recruit, support, and retain disadvantaged students, and support those with special education needs and disabilities.

For those learners aged 19 and over, providers receive disadvantage uplift so that there is increased funding for learners living in deprived areas. In addition, funds are made available to providers to help adults overcome barriers to learning. This includes Learner Support, which is available to colleges and providers to support learners aged 19 and over with a specific financial hardship which is preventing them from taking part and/or continuing in learning, and learning support which is available to meet the cost of putting in place reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for learners who have an identified learning difficulty and/or disability, to achieve their learning goal.

The department has also taken steps to improve apprentice pay, including aligning the apprentice national minimum wage rate with the national minimum wage rate for under 18s, and accepting in full the recommendations of the Independent Low Pay Commission to increase the apprentice national minimum wage by 9.7% from April 2023.

## ■ Arts and Technology: T-levels

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[122227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has any plans to introduce more T-Levels in creative and technical subjects.

**Robert Halfon:**

T Levels are based on the same employer-led standards as apprenticeships. Where there is strong evidence of employer support and it will be right for potential T Level students, the department will consider whether additional T Levels should be developed in creative subjects.

The BBC and UK Fashion and Textiles Association are among those who have informed the content for the T Level in Media, Broadcast & Production, and for the Craft & Design T Level, which are currently being developed.

## ■ **Childcare**

**Dan Carden:** **[124068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to improve the (a) accessibility, (b) affordability and (c) quality of childcare.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is committed to improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare. We continue to work across government to look at ways to make childcare more affordable and accessible, and to encourage families to use government-funded support they are entitled to.

In July 2022, the department announced measures to increase take-up of childcare support and reduce the costs and bureaucracy facing providers. We announced a £1.2 million marketing campaign via the Childcare Choices website to ensure that every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for. More information is available here: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The department aims to attract more people to childminding, expand the childminder market by reducing the costs and bureaucracy facing providers and encourage the growth of childminder agencies, enabling greater access to this flexible, affordable form of care. These plans aim to give providers more flexibility and autonomy and ensure families can access government support to save them money on their childcare bills. The full announcement is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-reduce-the-cost-of-childcare-for-parents>.

On top of spending over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on our early education entitlements, we are investing up to £180 million of recovery support in the early years sector to improve early language and train early years staff. The department has also reformed the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve outcomes for all at age 5, and reduce paperwork, so practitioners and teachers can spend more time supporting children.

## ■ **Childcare: Labour Turnover**

**Thangam Debbonaire:** **[123982]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she will take to improve staff retention at nurseries and other early years childcare settings.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department is providing a package of training, qualifications, expert guidance, and targeted support for the early years sector to focus on the development of the youngest and most disadvantaged children, and to help address retention challenges. We are funding a range of programmes, including additional funding for graduate

level specialist training, leading to early years teacher status and an accredited level 3 early years special education needs coordinator qualification. More information on the early years education recovery programme can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-education-recovery-programme>.

The department also has a range of support for staff who take advantage of training opportunities. For example, the early years initial teacher training programme includes an employer incentive payment to cover trainee travel costs, to support release time for trainee mentoring and for other associated costs such as purchasing training materials. Similarly, across all three phases of the professional development programme, nurseries and childminders receive a day rate for programme attendees, to cover various costs including travel and subsistence and to cover for staff absence. Our early years experts and mentors, recruited from the sector to support those most in need, will be paid a day rate to ensure costs do not fall to their employer.

## ■ Construction: Training

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[122282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help support the training of more (a) joiners and (b) plasterers.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department's skills reforms provide a ladder of opportunity that enables young people and adults to get good jobs and progress in their careers. This begins with the opportunities and social justice needed to access excellent education and skills training which lead to positive work outcomes.

We will deliver economic growth through building a skills system that is employer focused, high quality and fit for the future, and is flexible enough to lead to more people completing high-quality courses that meet employers' needs. This includes supporting more people to complete an apprenticeship or a Higher Technical Qualification, rolling out more T levels, establishing our network of 21 Institutes of Technology and expanding our popular Skills Bootcamps and Free Courses for Jobs programmes.

This ambitious skills agenda is backed by £3.8 billion of investment over this Parliament. We are using this to expand and strengthen higher and further education, ensuring skills training is aligned to the needs of employers to enable communities to thrive.

With this investment, we are putting employers at the heart of our skills system, which is why we are working with industry to shape our training offers, creating more routes into skilled employment in key economic sectors, including construction.

Our high-quality apprenticeships are supporting people of all ages with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start, or progress in, an exciting career in the construction sector. Employers in the construction sector can access a range of high-quality apprenticeship standards to meet their skills needs, including

the Level 2 Plasterer apprenticeship and the Level 3 Advanced carpentry and joinery apprenticeship.

T Levels are strengthening vocational options for young people finishing their GCSEs. These are two-year, technical qualifications designed with businesses and employers and are equivalent in size to three A levels. T Levels in Onsite Construction were introduced in 2021 and include an occupational specialism in Plastering.

The Free Courses for Jobs offer, which was launched in April 2021, allows eligible adults to access over 400 Level 3 qualifications (A-level equivalent) for free. Building and construction courses are available as part of this offer, including the Level 3 Diploma in Plastering.

Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills, with an offer of a job interview with an employer on completion. Skills Bootcamps in construction provide the opportunity to develop in-demand skills, including joinery and plastering.

High quality, careers information, advice and guidance is key to helping people to make informed decisions about their future, including being able to find out about and consider the different options, including those in construction, available to them.

The Careers & Enterprise Company is supporting schools and colleges to embed best practice in the delivery of careers information, advice and guidance, so young people are aware of the full range of training and careers available to them and have access to a broad range of employers and workplaces, including those in the construction sectors. This will be delivered through the national roll-out of Career Hubs, Career Leader training, and the Enterprise Adviser Network.

## ■ Department for Education: Written Questions

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[122089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named-day written questions their Department answered on time in 2022.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence from Members of Parliament, including written parliamentary questions. The below table provides the proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named day written parliamentary questions answered by the Department in 2022.

PQ TYPE	ANSWERED	ANSWERED ON TIME
PQ-Ordinary	2,649	2131 (77%)
PQ-Named	1,217	939 (80%)
Total	3,866	3,070 (79%)

**■ Education: Strikes**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[120978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, under what circumstances would people working under a Strikes Minimum Service Levels agreement be required to work.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[120979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the pay of teachers and support staff, in the context of proposed changes to rules on industrial action for education in the Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[120980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill will apply to staff working in (a) nursery, (b) primary, (c) secondary and (d) further education.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Government has introduced primary legislation for minimum service levels that will give the public basic levels of service during industrial action across a range of sectors, including education. It gives my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, powers to introduce secondary legislation and regulations that set terms for how minimum service levels will apply to education.

The Bill is clear that terms will be subject to consultation and scrutiny in Parliament. The Secretary of State has been clear that it is not her intention to introduce regulations at this time, rather to proceed by agreement and through guidance. If the Department does seek to set minimum service levels, the exact terms will be subject to consultation with all interested parties including trade unions, as set out in the Bill.

The Government respects the independence of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB). The Department is due to publish written evidence to the STRB shortly that will, alongside evidence from HM Treasury and other consultees including trade unions, inform their recommendations on teachers' pay for 2023/24. The Government accepted the STRB's recommendations for 2022/23 in full, giving teachers a pay rise between five and 8.9%.

Most teachers early in their career and around 40% of experienced teachers not already at the top of their pay scale will also receive pay increases through progression or promotion, which in total could mean rises of up to 15.9% this year.

Support staff pay is not set by the Department and schools have the freedom to set their own pay. Most follow local Government pay scales that are agreed between the Local Government Association and the trade unions that represent Local Government staff. Last year, their pay increased by 10% on average and was backdated to April 2022.

## ■ Free School Meals

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[122492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has been made of the difference between the eligibility threshold for free school meals in England compared to (a) Northern Ireland and (b) other devolved nations; and if she will take steps to review the threshold that applies for free school meals in England.

**Nick Gibb:**

Education, including free school meals (FSM), is a devolved matter. The Department is aware that approaches will vary between different administrations. This response outlines the information for England only.

The latest published statistics from the Department are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. The figures show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming FSM. This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, over one third of school children are now provided with FSM at a cost of over £1 billion a year. The Department currently has protections in place, ensuring that eligible pupils keep their FSM entitlement even if their household circumstances change.

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

## ■ Primary Education: Physical Education and Sports

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[122258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to inform schools and multi-academy trusts of the amount of investment they will receive through the Primary PE and Sport Premium in 2023-24.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is currently considering arrangements for the Primary PE and sport premium for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond, and will confirm the position as early as possible.

In line with current procedures, schools and multi-academy trusts will be informed of the amount they will be receiving when details of allocations are published.



## ■ Schools: West Midlands

**Sir Gavin Williamson:**

**[122132]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve school infrastructure in (a) South Staffordshire constituency, (b) Staffordshire and (c) the West Midlands.

**Nick Gibb:**

Well maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the Department.

The Department has allocated over £13 billion to improve the condition of school buildings since 2015, including £1.8 billion committed for the current 2022/23 financial year.

The Department recently announced that eligible schools will also receive an allocation from an additional £447 million in capital funding in 2022/23 for capital improvements to buildings and facilities, prioritising works to improve energy efficiency. This includes £709,572 for schools in South Staffordshire constituency, £7,266,813 for schools in the Staffordshire Local Authority and £49,563,732 for schools in the West Midlands.

Condition allocations are published online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-capital-funding>. As the funding of many of these allocations is determined at a local level, and because many responsible bodies, such as large academy trusts, cut across local boundaries, it is not possible to break the total spend down to constituency or Local Authority level.

In addition, the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) will carry out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at 500 schools across England, with buildings prioritised based on their condition. There are now 400 projects in the programme, with the most recent set of 239 schools announced in December 2022. Confirmed projects can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme>.

In total, fifty schools in the West Midlands have been provisionally selected for SRP to date. Of these, four are within Staffordshire, two of which are within the South Staffordshire constituency. These are Brindley Heath Junior School Academy and Wombourne High School.

Seven schools within Staffordshire Local Authority were part of the Priority School Building Programme (PSPB), two of which are still in progress.

## ■ Skills Bootcamps

**Emma Hardy:**

**[121154]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) people in total and (b) employees in total have participated Skills Bootcamps; and what data she holds on how many (i) employees have been requested to participate by their employer in and (ii) employers have requested that their employees participate in Skills Bootcamps.

**Robert Halfon:**

Data published in December 2021 shows that in the 2020/21 financial year, 2,800 learners participated in a Skills Bootcamp. Learner employment status was captured as part of an evaluation published in October 2021 and of those who reported their employment status, 61% were employed and 6% were self-employed.

In the 2021/22 financial year, there were 16,120 Skills Bootcamps learner starts. An implementation evaluation report for Skills Bootcamps delivery during financial year 2021/22, which will be published later this year, will provide further detail on learner starts, their employment status and whether a learner's employer has contributed to the cost of the Skills Bootcamp.

The department does not hold information on how many employees have been requested to participate by their employer in a Skills Bootcamp or on how many employers have requested that their employees participate in Skills Bootcamps.

**■ Students: Energy and Rents****Julian Sturdy:**[\[120921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of increases in the cost of (a) energy bills and (b) rent on students in winter 2022.

**Robert Halfon:**

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have impacted students. Decisions on student finance will have to be taken alongside other spending priorities to ensure the system remains financially sustainable and the costs of higher education are shared fairly between students and taxpayers, not all of whom have benefited from going to university.

On 11 January 2023, the department announced a one-off reallocation of funding so we can add £15 million to this year's student premium, to support additional hardship requests. There is now £276 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. This extra funding will complement the help that universities are providing through their own bursary, scholarship and hardship support schemes. The department works with the Office for Students to ensure universities support students in hardship using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 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.

The department has continued to increase maximum loans and grants for living and other costs for undergraduate and postgraduate students each year with a 2.3% increase for the current academic year, 2022/23. The department has also recently

announced a further 2.8% increase in maximum loans and grants for the 2023/24 academic year starting in August 2023.

In addition, the department has frozen maximum tuition fees for the 2022/23 academic year and also for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. We believe that a continued fee freeze achieves the best balance between ensuring that the system remains sustainable, offering good value for the taxpayer, and reducing debt levels for students in real terms.

Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. The department plays no direct role in the provision of student residential accommodation, whether the accommodation is managed by universities or private sector organisations. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including universities and private purpose-built student accommodation providers, are protected from high energy bills this winter.

## ■ Vocational Education

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[120962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve vocational and technical skills among school leavers.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is reforming technical education in England to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high quality technical options that support progression and meet employer needs.

Our reforms include the introduction of T Levels, which provide the knowledge and experience needed for skilled employment, further study, including higher education or higher technical education, and apprenticeships. We will have 23 T Levels available from 2023 and the major providers of vocational education are already fully engaged with T Level planning and delivery, with over 200 schools also either planning or already offering T Levels. We are working closely with employers and employer groups nationally to build their awareness about T Levels and the importance of vocational education and to encourage them to offer industry placements.

The department is also reforming higher technical education so that it provides a high-quality progression option for school leavers. Central to these reforms is the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) that are approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers. We are building awareness of HTQs through the introduction of the HTQ brand, a skills communication campaign targeted at young people, adults and employers, and also through improvements to information, advice and guidance. The first HTQs (in Digital) started being taught in September 2022, and there are over 70 providers able to deliver them. Further HTQs

in Construction, and Health and Science will be available from September 2023. All 15 occupational routes are due to be rolled out by 2025, where relevant occupational standards are available.

Apprenticeships are a core part of the government's skills agenda. They give employees high-quality, hands-on training to start and progress in work and give employers the skills they need to grow, helping them fill their vacancies and train their workforces to address industry skills gaps. They offer a high-quality route into more than 650 occupations, from entry-level to expert roles, spanning Levels 2 to 7. To support more employers across the country to access apprenticeships the department is increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by the 2024/25 financial year.

## ■ Vocational Education: School Leaving

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[122228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve vocational and technical skills among school leavers.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department is reforming technical education in England to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high quality vocational and technical options that support progression and meet employer needs. We are putting employers at the heart of the skills system and boosting the quality of qualifications on offer by basing them on employer-led occupational standards, so that all students leave education with the skills most needed by industry.

Our reforms include the introduction of T Levels, which are a substantial and rigorous qualification that are focused on high quality learning. T Levels also include an industry placement element of around nine weeks. They provide the knowledge and experience needed for apprenticeships, skilled employment and further study, including higher education or higher technical education. The department will have 23 T Levels available from 2023 and the major providers of vocational education are already fully engaged with T Level planning and delivery, with over 200 schools either planning or already offering T Levels. We are working closely with employers and employer groups nationally to build their awareness about T Levels and the importance of vocational education and to encourage them to offer industry placements.

The department is also reforming higher technical education so that it provides a high quality progression option for school leavers. Central to these reforms is the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) that are approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education as providing the skills demanded in the workplace by employers. We are building awareness of HTQs through the introduction of the HTQ brand, a skills communication campaign targeted at young people, adults and employers, as well as by improving information, advice and guidance. The first HTQs, in digital, started being taught in September 2022, and

there are over 70 providers able to deliver them. Further HTQs in construction, and health and science will be available from September 2023. All fifteen occupational routes are due to be rolled out by 2025, where relevant occupational standards are available.

Apprenticeships are a core part of the government's skills agenda, helping to drive economic growth by improving the skills pipeline. They give employees high-quality, hands-on training to start and progress in work. They give employers the skills they need to grow, helping them fill their vacancies and train their workforces to address industry skills gaps. Apprenticeships offer a high quality route into more than 650 occupations, from entry-level to expert roles, spanning levels 2 to 7. To support more employers across the country to access them, we are increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by the 2024/25 financial year.

## ■ Young People: Employment and Training

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[122230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of employment and training programmes for young people not in education, employment or training.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[125356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with her Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of employment and training programmes for young people not in education, employment or training.

**Robert Halfon:**

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

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, regularly meets with cabinet colleagues to discuss employment and training opportunities for young people and is actively considering ways to help young people into education, employment or training. The department wants to give young people the best chance to succeed.

At the end of 2021 10.5% of 16 to 24-year-olds were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), the lowest rate on record.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and support young people who are NEET. All 16 and 17-year-olds are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the September Guarantee regardless of qualifications gained. More information on this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/september-guarantee-offers-of-education-or-training-for-16-to-17-year-olds>.

A range of provision is available for young people aged 16 to 24 to equip them with the skills and experience they need to progress. The government's Plan for Jobs includes a range of support to young people to help minimise time spent NEET.

These include Youth Hubs and supported internships which offer tailored support for young people with special education needs and disabilities. More information on the government's Plan for Jobs is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/plan-for-jobs>.

The department is also taking steps to increase the number and quality of apprenticeships which will create further opportunities for young people. The new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is raising awareness of opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education. We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions to share and promote this information through Job Centre Plus.

### ■ Young People: Training

**Stephen Morgan:** [\[122229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing work-based vocational training for young people between the ages of 14 and 16.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department's reforms to the National Curriculum and qualifications since 2010 have given young people the opportunity to achieve their potential and prepare for a variety of careers.

Up to age 16, pupils are educated through a broad and balanced curriculum, which also provides music, sport, citizenship and cultural opportunities. The reformed GCSEs rigorously assess the knowledge pupils have acquired, and are in line with expected standards in countries with high performing education systems.

Alongside GCSEs, schools may provide vocational qualifications such as Technical Awards. Technical Awards provide an opportunity to gain knowledge not usually acquired through GCSEs. Some Technical Awards are designed to encourage an interest in technical subjects such as engineering and technology, which are valuable as part of a general education.

With this broad and balanced education, pupils are then able to specialise at age 16, choosing from a variety of high quality academic and technical qualifications including A levels, T Levels and apprenticeships.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Animals: Retail Trade

**Catherine West:** [\[105453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take legislative steps to prohibit online retailers from (a) listing for sale and (b) dispatching live animals.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Under The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 anyone who is in the business of selling animals as pets or breeding and selling dogs needs a valid licence from their local authority. Licensees must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse or revoke licences. Any licensee advertising animals for sale will need to include their licence number in the advert and specify the local authority who issued the licence. Advertisements must also include the age of the animal for sale displayed alongside a recognisable photograph.

Legislation protects all animals from being transported in a way likely to cause injury or suffering. Transportation of vertebrate animals for a commercial purpose must comply fully with legal requirements aimed at protecting their welfare, set out in Regulation (EC) 1/2005 (as retained). Vertebrate animals transported for non-commercial purposes and invertebrates are protected from injury or unnecessary suffering by a general duty of care provision in Article 4 of The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 (WATEO) and equivalent national legislation in Scotland and Wales.

**■ Dogs: Animal Breeding****Carla Lockhart:**[\[108359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to protect dogs from unregulated canine fertility clinics.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Those operating canine fertility clinics, and owners using their services, are required under The Animal Welfare Act 2006 to protect the animals involved from harm and to provide for their welfare in line with good practice. A breach of these provisions may lead to imprisonment, a fine, or both.

**Justin Madders:**[\[113295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders on the impact of canine fertility clinics on dog welfare.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs has not discussed canine fertility clinics with stakeholders.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[120189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to tackle illegal dog breeding clinics.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 Regulations), anyone in the business of breeding and selling dogs and/or who breeds three or more litters in a twelve-month period needs

to have a valid licence from their local authority. All dog breeders, including those who do not meet the threshold for licensing under the 2018 Regulations, are obliged under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to protect their animals from suffering and provide for their welfare needs in line with best practice. A breach of these provisions may lead to imprisonment, a fine, or both

Commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens were banned in England from 6th April 2020. This prohibits pet shops, pet dealers and other commercial outlets from selling these animals in England unless they themselves have bred them. It means anyone looking to get a puppy or kitten must buy direct from a breeder or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead.

### ■ Dogs: Imports

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[119251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were commercially imported each month into Great Britain in 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS COMMERCIALY IMPORTED IN 2022
January	5228
February	5322
March	5572
April	3533
May	2606
June	2396
July	2544
August	1806
September	2785
October	2753
November	2836
December	3509

This information is drawn from external systems not directly controlled by the department.



## ■ Dogs: Smuggling

**Tracey Crouch:** [\[117550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the number of puppies smuggled into Great Britain each year; and what steps she is taking to prevent puppy smuggling.

**Rebecca Pow:**

APHA does not hold specific data on the total number of puppies illegally smuggled into Great Britain each year.

APHA seized 691 puppies in 2021 and 264 puppies in 2022 which landed in Dover and were not compliant with our import requirements.

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill includes measures to tackle puppy smuggling. The Bill was re-introduced to the House of Commons in May 2022.

## ■ Dogs: Tagging

**John Spellar:** [\[117440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will estimate the number and proportion of dogs that are not microchipped; and what steps she is taking to help reduce that number.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Around 10% of dogs in the UK are not microchipped (PDSA, PAW Report 2022).

Under the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 it is an offence to not microchip a dog. The Government works with stakeholders to remind the public of this legal requirement and the benefits of microchipping.

## ■ Environment Protection: Brexit

**Ruth Jones:** [\[106474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made on delivering a green Brexit.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Since we have left the EU, we have introduced a range of measures to improve our environment and deliver our ambition for a green Brexit.

To take a few examples, we passed the first Environment Act in over two decades, which sets out how we plan to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK. The Act will help us leave our environment in a better state for future generations and set an ambitious target to halt species decline by 2030. This Act includes the new Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) which will effectively enforce these enhanced environmental rules and standards. By 31 January 2023 we will publish our Environment Improvement Plan, which builds on the 25 Year Environment Plan (published in 2018). It will set out how we will deliver against our cross-government targets and commitments.

We have introduced a Net Zero Strategy, and announced measures to restore nature across England, to address the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss – trebling our tree planting rate, restoring 35,000 ha of peatland by the end of the parliament, and initiating lasting action on species recovery.

Alongside these and other measures, the Retained EU Law Bill will provide further opportunity to ensure that environmental law is fit for purpose and able to drive improved environmental outcomes, whilst also ensuring regulators can deliver efficiently. This will ensure the UK regulatory framework is appropriate and tailored to the UK.

Leaving the EU also means farming in England is now going through the biggest change in a generation. Most importantly, the Government's approach to working with the farming sector is changing. We are improving our policies and services to make them more effective, fair, flexible, accessible and workable for farmers.

We are introducing policies that work for farm businesses, food production and the environment. Food is still the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. The Food Strategy includes plans that will support farmers to boost home-grown fruit and vegetable production, and encourage people to buy more locally-sourced, high-welfare food.

Farmers also play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. If we want farming and food production to be resilient and sustainable over the long term, then farming and nature can and must go hand in hand. Many farmers have already moved to this way of operating. Those who are leading the way already know that you can produce quality food, at a profit with strong yields by farming with nature instead of against it.

The Government needs to catch up and help other farmers join this growing movement. This means enabling farmers to have resilient businesses, produce the food our nation needs, and also to protect and enhance the natural environment – looking after our soils, reducing air and water pollution, managing flood risk, reducing emissions and sequestering carbon.

## ■ Flood Control

**Sir Mark Hendrick:**

[\[120867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what provisions her Department has planned for the flood warnings issued across the UK for 11 January 2023.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As of 12 January 2023, the Environment Agency (EA) has issued over 60 flood warnings and over 160 flood alerts across England. The EA is prepared to act wherever and whenever it is needed. It has 5,000 trained staff across the country ready to respond to flood events. These staff will issue flood warnings and operate flood risk management assets when flooding is forecast, and work with partners to support communities at risk.

Flood warnings give people valuable time to prepare for flooding and enable the emergency services to prepare and help communities. The EA's Check for Flooding service provides flood warning information; river, sea, groundwater and rainfall levels; as well as the five-day flood forecast. The EA uses its flood warning system to directly alert over 1.6 million users when flooding is expected in their area.

The EA constantly monitors rainfall, river levels and sea conditions to forecast the possibility of flooding. The present situation shows local river and surface water flooding impacts are probable in parts of South West England and possible in parts of the North, the Midlands, and far South of England.

Slower responding rivers, particularly in parts of the West Midlands and North East England, are likely to remain high in the short term leading to further river flooding. River and surface water flooding are also possible across parts of the North of England, and local groundwater flooding is possible in the short term in the south of England.

The EA continues to respond to the changing situation. It is actively liaising with communities through local resilience forums, which are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the EA and others.

## ■ Fly-tipping

**Julian Knight:**

**[117634]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to tackle fly-tipping.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra officials continue to take steps to tackle fly-tipping, including working with other Government departments such as the Ministry of Justice with whom we liaised to develop the first part of the fly-tipping toolkit on how local authorities can present robust cases to court. This guide can be found on the [website](#) of the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG).

Defra chairs the NFTPG which brings together a range of stakeholders, including officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Devolved Administrations, to promote and disseminate best practice to prevent fly-tipping.

In 2022, we also provided capital funding of £450,000 through our fly-tipping intervention grant to enable several councils to implement a range of measures to tackle fly-tipping.

We have also consulted on the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking. This proposes that all relevant waste holders will be required to digitally record details about the waste they manage. This will allow the Environment Agency to detect waste that does not reach the next stage and likely reduce the scope for illegal activity such as fly-tipping.

## ■ Forests: Environment Protection

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[98934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce deforestation (a) in the UK and (b) overseas.

**Trudy Harrison:**

In England, when a felling licence is issued, there is a presumption to replant after tree felling. The Forestry Commission also has an enforcement capability under the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended) to combat unlicensed and illegal felling, with additional measures in the Environment Act 2021 that will commence on 1 January 2023 that will enhance these enforcement tools.

Where trees are felled without restocking conditions attached, Open Habitats Policy provides definition if compensatory woodland planting is required. Similarly, the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain will also define compensatory planting required as a result of woodland habitat loss due to planned development if permitted.

The UK Government has introduced world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Act to help tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. We recently ran a consultation to seek views on how we should implement Environment Act provisions, including which commodities we should regulate through the first round of secondary legislation, and have since published a summary of responses, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-illegal-deforestation-in-uk-supply-chains>.

Deforestation is a global issue that requires global collaboration, and this world-leading due diligence legislation will help tackle as part of a wider package of measures, designed to improve the sustainability of our supply chains contribute to global efforts to protect forests and other ecosystems.

## ■ Highly Protected Marine Areas

**Chris Grayling:**

[\[117486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to accelerate the designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas in UK waters.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Defra recently consulted on five candidate pilot Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). The consultation closed on 28 September. The responses are currently being analysed and will inform the Secretary of State's decision on whether pilot sites should be designated and if so, what their final site boundaries should be. Any pilot HPMAs would be designated through the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 by 6 July 2023. This would be a year from the start of the consultation as required by the Act.

## ■ **Hunting: Animal Welfare**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[105517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made a recent assessment of the impact of the operation of the Hunting Act 2004 on animal welfare standards.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We have made no such assessment.

## ■ **Marine Environment: International Cooperation**

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[114835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he expects the UK to meet its Global Ocean Alliance 30by30 target to protect England's seas by 2030.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Since 2019, the UK has been leading the Global Ocean Alliance of countries championing ambitious ocean action under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), including the target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 which was agreed at the CBD COP15 in Montreal, December 2022.

The 30by30 target is a global target. Nearly 8.3% of the global ocean is now protected. Achieving a global 30by30 target will require an international effort, from all countries and sectors. The UK is leading the way. We have established a comprehensive network of 374 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering 40% of English waters, and we are now focusing on making sure they are properly protected.

The Government is committed to protecting 30% of land and sea in the UK by 2030 (30by30). We consulted on our approach to 30by30 in the Nature Recovery Green Paper, which closed in May 2022. We are now in the process of analysing responses and will publish a Government response on conclusion of this exercise.

## ■ **Pet Foods: Inflation**

**David Linden:** [\[117900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the effect of inflation in the cost of pet food for domestic animals on trends in the level of animal welfare.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra has not made an assessment of the impact of the effect of inflation in the cost of pet food for domestic animals. Defra is in close contact with animal welfare organisations about cost of living issues affecting animal welfare.

## ■ Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs

**Kenny MacAskill:**

**[119250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs were imported into the UK through the Pet Travel Scheme in each month in 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF DOGS
January	18,840
February	13,479
March	10,020
April	24,315
May	20,678
June	26,092
July	27,579
August	49,565
September	30,903
October	24,395
November	13,434
December	20,102

This is a summary of animals entering Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme via an approved route. It does not include pet animals that enter other parts of the UK (such as Northern Ireland or the Channel Islands) or pet animals that enter Great Britain from other parts of the UK. It does not include any animals that enter Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme from the Republic of Ireland (as these movements do not need to follow an approved route). Additionally, this data is based upon reports supplied by pet checkers operating approved routes, and not all pet checkers have submitted their final reports for 2022; the month of December in particular has a number of gaps in the data thus far provided. We are continuing to chase pet checkers for these missing figures but have yet to receive definitive responses.

**■ Pets: Travel****Fleur Anderson:** [\[108423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to reduce barriers to people transporting their pets to and from Europe.

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[108424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of reinstating the pet passport system for travel to Europe.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are continuing to seek agreement from the European Commission on awarding Great Britain 'Part 1' listed status and recognition of the UK's tapeworm-free status. We see no valid animal health reason for these not to be granted. Achieving these would reduce barriers for pet owners and assistance dog users transporting their pets to the EU and allow them to use pet passports.

**■ Pets: Veterinary Services****John Spellar:** [\[117455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of consolidation in the veterinary sector on veterinary costs for pet owners.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra considers the establishing and an agreement of fees to be a private agreement between the vet and the client. If unsatisfied the client can take their custom elsewhere; thus setting the market in which the veterinary business has to compete. The Competition and Markets Authority is the UK's principal competition authority, responsible among other things for enforcing the law against anti-competitive practices, and investigating mergers that could reduce competition.

**■ REACH Enforcement Regulations 2008****Stella Creasy:** [\[119049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether she plans to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the REACH Enforcement Regulations 2008.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its REUL stock to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Bill, including in relation to UK REACH.

**■ Reindeer: Exports****Henry Smith:** [\[113213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reindeer were exported from the UK in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021; and to which countries those exports were sent in each year.

**Rebecca Pow:**

There has only been one export of reindeer in 2021, this was exported from the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland and the consignment contained two reindeers.

There were no Exports of reindeer in 2020.

The information that we have provided is a true reflection of the information that we have access to. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this data, as we can only rely on the information that has been input into external customer facing systems by third parties.

**■ Reindeer: Imports****Henry Smith:** [\[113212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reindeer were imported into the UK in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021; and from which countries they were imported.

**Rebecca Pow:**

There were no reindeer imports into Great Britain during 2020.

During 2021, there were two imports of reindeer (two consignments of two animals, a total of 4 animals). Both of these consignments came from Northern Ireland.

The information that we have provided is a true reflection of the information that we have access to. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this data, as we can only rely on the information that has been input into external customer facing systems by third parties.

**■ River Foss and River Ouse: Flood Control****Rachael Maskell:** [\[106515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress has she made on upper catchment management schemes in the River (a) Foss and (b) Ouse.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Planned investment to help better protect York following flooding in 2015 is expected to be £100 million by the end of 2023, better protecting approximately 3000 homes and businesses from flooding. Investment to date is approximately £61 million, which has already better protected 2200 homes and businesses.

The River Foss Flood Storage Area (FSA) investment is approximately £17.5 million, better protecting 490 properties along the River Foss from flooding. The Foss FSA is 2km northeast of Strensall, and will hold 1,000,000m<sup>3</sup> of water during extreme rainfall



events, which will be released at a controlled rate once downstream river levels recede. It is scheduled for completion by winter 2023. In addition to improving flood protection, the scheme will create valuable new wetland habitats, including two shallow ponds. The banks of the River Foss will be reshaped to reduce the amount of sediment in the river to improve water quality. Once the scheme is built, some of the surrounding land can continue to be farmed and so will remain in productive use. The control structure has now been completed with over 660m<sup>3</sup> or approximately 1600 tonnes of low carbon concrete poured. 85% of the embankment has been completed, although earthwork is now paused due to unworkable ground conditions. The remaining work will recommence in spring once the ground is suitable for the machinery.

City of York Council is leading the York and North Yorkshire Catchment Flood Risk Management project to take a long-term approach to managing flood risk throughout the Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse catchment, upstream of York. The project is funded as part of the Flood and Coastal Risk Innovative Resilience Programme. The five-year project includes several packages aimed at creating a legacy of natural flood management (NFM) in the catchment. The project will provide a better understanding of how changes in the catchment affect flood risk downstream, showing how NFM can help manage flood risk locally and engage with communities to understand different perspectives. The business case for the project was approved in August 2022, with partners and suppliers already engaged to deliver. Innovative catchment modelling has commenced in collaboration with local and national partner organisations. Grant agreements have been developed to support in providing advice to farmers and land managers and to manage a programme of NFM investment. A grant scheme to fund NFM measures in the catchment is currently under development and will be rolled out from April 2023.

Natural England, through the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) partnership, has been working in partnership with City of York Council to develop and deliver farm advice to achieve the outcomes set out in the York and North Yorkshire Catchment Management Project. This will build on the existing advice to farmers focused on improving soils for flood and resource management. This includes an additional farm adviser supported by City of York Council to deliver direct advice to farmers on flood and resource management measures. CSF will continue to run successful events for farmers across the catchment on the importance of healthy soils and combatting soil erosion, in partnership with Yorkshire Water, Rivers Trust and Yorkshire Dales National Park.

#### ■ **Surfing: Dorset**

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

**[113159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he expects Natural England will give a substantive response as a statutory consultee to the planning application submitted by WHWhite Limited to Dorset Council in November 2021 for a surf

lagoon on land adjacent to the Avon Heath Country Park in Dorset; and for what reason that response has been delayed.

**Trudy Harrison:**

Natural England have previously provided pre-application advice to W H White Limited on their Brocks Pine surf lagoon development proposal at Avon Heath Country Park in Dorset in December 2020 both on potential impacts on protected features, as well as suitable avoidance and mitigation measures.

Natural England are also advising the local planning authority (LPA) in their statutory duty to assess the impact of the development on internationally important wildlife both on the site (Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation) and on adjoining land (Avon Valley Ramsar site). Details are awaited from other parties to enable the LPA to complete this process.

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

### ■ Alaa Abdel Fattah

**Naz Shah:**

[\[117620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to hold further discussions with his Egyptian counterpart on (a) the release of and (b) access to consular support for Alaa Abd El-Fattah.

**David Rutley:**

The UK Government makes regular representations about Mr Alaa Abd El Fattah's imprisonment, welfare, lack of consular access and will continue to do so until his case is resolved. The Prime Minister raised consular access with President Sisi on 7 November and the Foreign Secretary has raised the case with Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry on several occasions. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa has also raised Mr El-Fattah's case on a number of occasions, most recently on 5 December with the Egyptian Ambassador.

### ■ Colombia: Journalism

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

[\[120904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Colombian counterpart on tackling violence against media professionals in that country.

**David Rutley:**

Colombia is a UK Human Rights Priority Country and UK ministers and senior officials regularly discuss security issues with the Colombian Government. Most recently, I [Minister Rutley] met with the Colombian Foreign Minister at the UN Security Council on 11 January to discuss tackling the root causes of violence in Colombia. The UK has provided longstanding support through our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programme to support at risk-Human Rights Defenders

and social leaders, including journalists. We will continue to work closely with organisations such as the Foundation for Freedom of the Press (FLIP) and UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in support of human rights and media freedom.

### ■ **Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[125305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 122106 on Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict, whether he has called on the government of Rwanda to end the support for the M23 armed group that was found in the Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

As previously stated in the answer to question 122106, we have raised the findings of the report with the Government of Rwanda. When I [Minister Mitchell] spoke to both the Rwandan and the Democratic Republic of Congo Foreign Ministers, I [Minister Mitchell] urged both parties to meet the commitments made under Nairobi and Luanda political processes.

### ■ **Human Rights**

**Geraint Davies:**

[\[123849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to develop a departmental strategy to promote human rights and civic space.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK has a long-standing commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe. We are committed to being a force for good in the world, with human rights, open societies, democracy, and the international rule of law acting as our guiding lights. We continue to review our policy and guidance in relation to civic space and human rights defenders within the broader strategic framing of open societies and human rights. It is too soon to discuss the outcome of that process but we continue to engage with key stakeholders on these important questions.

### ■ **India: Religious Freedom**

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[121089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made representations to the Government in India on (a) promotion freedom of religious belief and (b) anti-conversion laws.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all and promoting respect and tolerance between communities. We condemn any instances of discrimination because of religion or belief, regardless of the country or faith involved. Reports of violence against religious minorities are a matter for the Indian police and

legal system. The British High Commission in New Delhi and our Deputy High Commissions across India regularly meet with religious representatives and official figures. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister for South Asia, also regularly speaks with the High Commissioner of India, and freedom of religion or belief forms part of that dialogue.

#### ■ **Iran: Demonstrations**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[117465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing new sanctions on Iran in response to the human rights violations against protestors in that country.

**David Rutley:**

The UK maintains sanctions on over 300 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights violations, nuclear proliferation and terrorism. Since protests began we have introduced three separate sanctions packages, imposing sanctions on leading political, judicial and security officials for their role in committing serious human rights violations in suppressing the current protests. We keep our designations list under constant review and will continue to work with partners to ensure the Iranian regime is held to account for its appalling actions.

#### ■ **Iran: Unmanned Air Vehicles**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[117466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the sale of Iranian-made drones to hostile states.

**David Rutley:**

Iran's support for the Russian military campaign in Ukraine is deplorable and the supply of drones is in violation of UN Security Council resolution 2231. The UK has raised this issue alongside partners at the UN Security Council on 19 October and 19 December 2022. On 20 October and 13 December, the UK adopted new sanctions alongside the EU against Iranian individuals and entities involved in these transfers. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue to work with partners to hold Iran to account for all of its malign activity, through our words and actions.

#### ■ **Nigeria: Elections**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[120911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial and (b) other support his Department has allocated to support international election monitoring in Nigeria for the 2023 election in that country.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The UK Government is supporting Nigeria to deliver free, fair and credible elections through our diplomatic engagement, technical advice, programmes and election

observation. The British High Commission plans to deploy observers to polling stations. Additionally, we will coordinate with other international and domestic observer missions including the Commonwealth delegation. I have discussed electoral preparedness and support the UK Government is providing with the chairman of the Nigerian electoral commission on 17 January. We have provided £5 million in funding since 2019 to Nigerian civil society to strengthen oversight of the elections. This includes supporting the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room to provide citizen education and engagement on the process and the 2022 Electoral Act.

## ■ Peru: Politics and Government

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[118926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the number of tourists stranded in Machu Picchu region of Peru following the blocking of roads and suspension of train services during protests against the overthrow and arrest of President Castillo.

**David Rutley:**

We continue to closely monitor recent political developments, public protests, and the potential impact of the ongoing political situation on British Nationals in Peru. Protests have caused disruption to air, road and rail transport, including travel to and from Machu Picchu. In December we were aware of a number of British Nationals, as well as tourists from other countries, who were unable to leave Machu Picchu for a period of time. Staff from the British Embassy Lima assisted the three British Nationals who requested help in December and are available to assist British Nationals who request help in light of ongoing disruption to travel in Peru.

## ■ Religious Freedom: Christianity

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[121017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of potential trends in the level of persecution of Christians based on their faith in 2023.

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[121018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of data collected by Aid to the Church in Need, published on 3 January 202, which states that 100 priests and women religious were kidnapped, arrested or killed worldwide in 2022.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Promotion of the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) will continue to be a key human rights priority for the UK in 2023. A range of analyses, including reports from organisations which look at trends, informs our work and approach to freedom of religion or belief. We demonstrated the depth of our commitment to FoRB by hosting an international Ministerial conference in July 2022. We continue to recognise the

issue of persecution of Christians globally on account of their faith, alongside recognising the persecution of others on the basis of their religion or belief.

### ■ Saudi Arabia: Prisons

**Hilary Benn:** [\[117472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Gulf Strategy Fund supports any work in prisons in Saudi Arabia.

**David Rutley:**

The Gulf Strategy Fund does not support any work in prisons in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### ■ Ukraine: Russia

**Mark Pritchard:** [\[122104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to support the establishment of a special tribunal to investigate the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK is committed to holding Russia to account for its actions in Ukraine, including by supporting the International Criminal Court and Ukrainian domestic investigations into alleged crimes committed in Ukraine. The UK has also accepted Ukraine's invitation to join a 'core group' to consider options for ensuring criminal accountability for allegations of the crime of aggression.

### ■ Zimbabwe: Health Services

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[122105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held discussions with his counterpart in Zimbabwe on the potential impact of the Health Services Bill on (a) workers' rights, (b) rights of assembly and expression and (c) health service capacity in that country.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

The Foreign Secretary has not held discussions with his counterpart in Zimbabwe on the potential impact of the Health Services Bill.

However the former Minister for Africa raised broader human rights issues, including freedom of peaceful assembly and association, with the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe on 30 June last year. And our Ambassador in Harare made a public statement on the right to peaceful assembly and association on 2 October 2022.

Embassy officials regularly engage with the Government of Zimbabwe on how to improve health service capacity. Over the last 10 years the UK has provided over £300 million in support for health system strengthening, health security and ending preventable deaths. We also discuss overall economic management including public financial management.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ **Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance**

**Hywel Williams:**

[\[125259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK's 20-year vision for antimicrobial resistance; and what progress his Department has made on reducing the impact of resistance on animals.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The United Kingdom's 20 year vision to contain and control antimicrobial resistance (antimicrobial resistance) by 2040, and the first in a series of five year national action plans (NAPs), both published in 2019, were co-developed with the devolved administrations, including the Welsh Government. The vision and NAP take a 'One Health' and whole of Government approach. The Welsh Government leads on one of the eight programmes within the NAP and sits on the UK wide delivery board, which provides oversight of delivery. Ministers last met to discuss progress in tackling the threat of antimicrobial resistance at a Ministerial round-table in May 2022. Working closely with the devolved administrations, Government has begun the process of developing the next AMR NAP, 2024-2029, which will be designed to maintain progress towards delivery of the 20 year vision.

The UK's annual report on Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance, Sales and Surveillance (UK-VARSS 2021) showed that, in 2021, the UK recorded the lowest antibiotic use in food producing animals to date and that, since 2014, sales of veterinary antibiotics have reduced by 55% and sales of antibiotics critical in human health decreased for the seventh consecutive year, falling by 83%. Reflecting this, the UK has measured overall decreasing trends of resistance in healthy poultry and pigs since AMR monitoring began in 2014.

### ■ **Cancer: Health Services**

**Feryal Clark:**

[\[126863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the 10-Year Cancer Plan for England will be published.

**Helen Whately:**

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

### ■ **Care Homes: Newcastle upon Tyne Central**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[125345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of care homes were rated as good by the Care Quality Commission in Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency as of 11 January 2023.

**Helen Whately:**

As of 11 January 2023, 20 (71%) of care homes were rated as good overall by the Care Quality Commission in the Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency.

**■ Community Care: Autism and Learning Disability****Barbara Keeley:**[\[123900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the RedQuadrant report entitled Building the Right Support: An analysis of funding flows published on 14 June 2022, what progress his Department has made in response to the primary recommendation of that report on the need for comprehensive financial monitoring on the specific group of people who are within the scope of BTRS covering NHS and local government expenditure.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* We recognise the need to improve how data is collected and better understand the specific costs related to Building the Right Support. That is why the Building the Right Support Delivery Board set up a Funding Flows task and finish group to look at how to improve national oversight of the National Health Service and local authority spend.

The Funding Flows task and finish group has met on four occasions since it was established in September 2022 and is attended by representatives from the Department, NHS England, Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the Building the Right Support Advisory Group and the voluntary sector. The Funding Flows task and finish group will report progress to the Building the Right Support Delivery Board meeting in March 2023.

**■ Coronavirus and Influenza: Vaccination****Gareth Thomas:**[\[122408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that housebound patients receive a (a) covid-19 booster and (b) influenza vaccination; and if he will make a statement.

**Gareth Thomas:**[\[122410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help housebound patients receive a (a) Covid-19 booster and (b) influenza vaccination; and if he will make a statement.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Housebound individuals were prioritised from the very start of the current COVID-19 booster campaign, alongside care home residents and staff, with home visits for autumn boosters starting from 5 September. Opportunities to co-administer COVID-19 booster and flu vaccines have been offered where feasible, but not to unduly delay the administration of either jab.



Local arrangements are in operation to vaccinate those who are housebound, with general practitioners, community pharmacies and National Health Service community teams visiting those who are housebound and are eligible for their COVID-19 booster and flu vaccines.

Nationally, to ensure eligible housebound individuals have access to a home visit for vaccinations, NHS regions and integrated care systems (ICS) together with primary care networks and Community Pharmacy-led and local vaccination services are working jointly to monitor progress and identify whether further interventions are required to help support and increase uptake.

A standard operating procedure (SOP) has been provided to Regions, ICSs and local health teams to support their efforts in providing COVID-19 vaccinations to housebound people, including capacity planning. This SOP can be found at the following link: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/06/C1432-Standard-Operating-Procedure-Roving-and-mobile-models-v2.pdf>

We continue to focus on offering housebound individuals their seasonal vaccinations and increasing uptake of both COVID and flu vaccinations for all eligible groups this winter.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Anosmia**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[123941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to support further research on the relationship between covid-19 and the loss of the sense of smell.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Since 2020, the Department has funded two specific research projects costing approximately £310,000 through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), looking at the prevention and treatment of olfactory dysfunction or loss of smell following COVID-19 and other viral infections. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including COVID-19 infection and loss of sense of smell.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[123919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 lateral flow tests issued by (a) the NHS and (b) pharmacies are able to detect current and emergent variants of covid-19.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 19 January 2023]:* The performance of the lateral flow devices used in the National Health Service (NHS) are continually monitored and are subject to further evaluation at Porton Down to ascertain that they are able to detect new COVID-19 variants that may emerge into circulation in the United Kingdom.

Tests sold by pharmacies need to be approved under the Coronavirus Test Devices Approval (CTDA) regulations. As part of the post market surveillance, manufacturers of CTDA approved tests need to provide data to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency showing that performance levels are maintained against new COVID-19 variants that may emerge into circulation in the UK.

Both the evaluation conducted at Porton Down and CTDA maintain a highly rigorous testing process and ensure that COVID-19 tests used in the NHS and sold by pharmacies meet strict quality standards. UK consumers can be confident in the tests available, which is vital for managing COVID-19.

### ■ **Coronavirus: Surveys**

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[125397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Office of National Statistics on the funding of the Covid-19 Infection Survey beyond March 2023.

**Maria Caulfield:**

Discussions are ongoing on the future funding of the COVID-19 Infection Survey beyond March 2023, we are considering all options.

### ■ **Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs**

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[125311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking in Human Organs.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The United Kingdom strongly supports the core aims of the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Organs and meets these through existing legislation which sets out that in the UK valid consent must always be received before an organ transplant proceeds and that no organ transplant may take place for financial gain. The convention has not yet been ratified and further detailed work would be required before this could take place. This would be to ensure that our domestic law and practice, including in the devolved administrations, meets the procedural and other requirements of the convention.

### ■ **Death: Weather**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[120934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of excess deaths caused by cold homes in 2022.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 16 January 2023]:* The Office for National Statistics does not publish data on the number of excess deaths specifically attributed to cold homes.

## ■ Dental Services

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[125348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to publish an assessment of the areas of the country with lowest levels of access to NHS dentistry.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are no current plans to publish an assessment. In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet National Health Service dental needs and increase access to dental services throughout England.

NHS England are leading discussions with the British Dental Association, other dental stakeholder groups and patients for further reform of the NHS dental system in 2023. We are aware that certain areas have particular challenges with access to dental care. One of the aims of the next stage of NHS dental system reforms is to improve access for patients, including in areas that traditionally experience access challenges.

We have already made amendments to the NHS dental contract that aim to make the dental contract more appealing to dentists and improve access for patients. A summary of these changes can be found in the Written Ministerial Statement, issued in July 2022 at the following link: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-07-19/hcws223>

## ■ Dental Services: Medical Treatments Abroad

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[124013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk of people going overseas for dental treatment as a result of a difficulties accessing NHS dentistry in the UK; and what risks he has identified in people pursuing that course of action.

**Neil O'Brien:**

State funded healthcare is a devolved matter outside of England, and is the responsibility respectively of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments. The Department has not assessed the risk of patients going overseas for dental treatment as a result of difficulties in accessing National Health Service dental care in England. However, NHS England has made available guidance for patients on seeking treatment abroad, including the risks which is available at the following link: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/going-abroad-for-treatment/going-abroad-for-medical-treatment/>

NHS patients in England can access care from any high street NHS dental practice accepting patients, or NHS 111 can arrange urgent care if needed. Community Dental Services also provide NHS dental care to people who cannot be treated in general dental practices. This includes vulnerable people or those in situations or locations that are out of reach.

**■ Dental Services: Newcastle upon Tyne Central****Chi Onwurah:**[\[125347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of patients in Newcastle Upon Tyne Central constituency who are not registered with an NHS dentist; and what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry services in that constituency.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There are no plans to make estimate. Unlike general practitioners' patients, dental patients are not registered to a particular practice. A dental practice can accept a patient for a course of treatment if they have capacity to deliver that treatment. There are no geographical restrictions on which dental practice a patient may attend, allowing patients the choice of where they receive treatment.

In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet National Health Service dental needs and increase access to dental services. As part of this, on 25 November 2022, the Department introduced legislation to amend the NHS dental contract, which now more fairly remunerates dentists to deliver care to high needs patients. This in turn will improve access for these patients.

The legislation further improves access by requiring NHS dentists to update their NHS.UK profiles more frequently to ensure patients have access to up-to-date information on where they can access care.

The Department continues to work with NHS England and the dental sector on further reform and long-term solutions with the aim to improve patient access and reduce health inequalities.

**■ Dentistry: Registration****Daisy Cooper:**[\[120164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the (a) shortest, (b) mean average and (c) longest period of time that an overseas qualified dentist applying to the General Dentistry Council's Oral Surgery Register has had to wait for a decision since March 2020.

**Daisy Cooper:**[\[120167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the General Dentistry Council on restarting the assessment of overseas qualified dentists who wish to join the Oral Surgery Register.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The General Dental Council (GDC) is the independent regulator of dentists and dental care professionals practising in the United Kingdom.

The Department does not hold data on the length of time it takes the GDC to process applications to its register by overseas qualified dentists. This data is held by the GDC.

I have not had any discussions with the GDC about the resumption of its assessment process for overseas qualified dentists who wish to join the GDC's register. This process resumed in January 2022 after safety restrictions brought in as part of the COVID-19 response made it necessary to suspend it in April 2020.

## ■ Epilepsy and Pregnancy

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[120932]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons epilepsy is allocated only one achievement point in the General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlements (Amendment) Directions 2019; and what steps he is taking to ensure that GP's put women who are prescribed Valproate and able to have children on a pregnancy prevention programme.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 16 January 2023]:* Epilepsy is allocated one achievement point within the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) in the General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlements (Amendment) (No.2) Directions 2022. QOF clinical indicators are subject to approval by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and are underpinned by NICE clinical guidelines and are subject to consultation with the General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association.

Sodium valproate must not be used in any woman or girl able to have children unless she has a Pregnancy Prevention Programme in place. This is laid out in guidance issued by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, last updated in February 2021, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/valproate-use-by-women-and-girls>.

The programme is designed to make sure patients are fully aware of the risks and the need to avoid becoming pregnant. It includes the completion of a signed risk acknowledgement form when their treatment is reviewed by a specialist, which must take place at least annually.

A Valproate Registry has been set up which, in line with a recommendation of the Cumberlege review, has been extended to other antiepileptic drugs taken during pregnancy. It includes all women in England who are taking National Health Service (NHS) prescribed valproate and identifies when they are pregnant and accessing NHS care for that pregnancy. The registry improves our ability to monitor implementation and compliance with the Pregnancy Prevention Programme.

## ■ General Practitioners

**Damien Moore:**

**[125476]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to help ensure that in-person GP consultations are the default format offered by practices.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Department does not plan to make in person consultations the default format because general practitioners (GP) practices should be determining the most appropriate appointment mode for their patients based on clinical needs and patients' preferences and access needs.

NHS England guidance is clear that GP practices must provide face-to-face appointments, alongside remote consultations and should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. Alongside face-to-face appointments, remote consultations can provide additional choice, flexibility and convenience for patients. Practices should offer a range of access routes, and patients unable to access remote general practice consultations for any reason should be offered an alternative appointment mode. We expect patients to experience the same high quality of care regardless of how they access their GP surgery.

**Health Services: Males****Karl McCartney:**[\[125326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of publishing a Men's Health Strategy.

**Neil O'Brien:**

No assessment has been made. However, the Government is taking action to address conditions that affect men, including suicide, heart disease, cancer and associated risk factors such as smoking. As with other major conditions and drivers of ill health, we consider the impact that each issue has at a population level and the most effective ways to address them, including for the groups most impacted.

**Health: Energy****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[124109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) Public Health England, (c) health professional organisations and (d) other relevant stakeholders on the potential impact of the (i) forced installation and (ii) self-disconnection of prepayment meters on household health.

**Neil O'Brien:**

There have been no recent discussions. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care work collaboratively on such areas of crosscutting policy. The Government recognises that rising energy prices can make it more difficult for people to heat their homes and that cold homes can have an adverse impact on the health of vulnerable population groups.

We are providing a £37 billion package of cost-of-living support to help households and businesses this winter, including the Energy Price Guarantee. Prepayment meter

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

The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets has strict rules in place that mean whenever suppliers install a prepayment meter, they must verify that it is safe and reasonably practicable to do so. This should include consideration of whether a customer's vulnerability would make a prepayment meter inappropriate, for example where medical equipment is required.

## ■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control

**Sir Greg Knight:**

[\[125258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's readiness for any future pandemic; and what assessment he has made of the potential impact on that readiness of the discontinuance of several of the initiatives of the UK Vaccine Taskforce.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The United Kingdom has flexible and well-tested pandemic response capabilities. We are continuously updating our pandemic plans to reflect the latest scientific information and lessons learned from exercises and our response to emergencies, including COVID-19. We cannot perfectly predict the characteristics of a new pandemic pathogen and therefore our pandemic preparedness is an area kept under constant review to ensure readiness.

The UK Vaccine Taskforce's responsibilities including vaccine supply, onshoring of UK vaccine capability and international engagement are being integrated across Government functions including UK Health Security Agency. As part of our overall pandemic response capabilities the Government has in place an Advanced Purchase Agreement to guarantee access to pandemic specific influenza vaccines, which would likely be available within four to six months after the pandemic has started.

In addition, at the end of December, UK Government and Moderna entered a strategic partnership to set up mRNA research and development and manufacturing facilities in the UK, capable of producing up to 250 million vaccines per year in the event of a pandemic.

## ■ IVF: Gender Recognition

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[\[125527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the commitments to deliver equitable IVF access set out in the Women's Health Strategy include (a) trans men and (b) non-binary people assigned female at birth.

**Maria Caulfield:**

We expect fertility services to be commissioned in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, ensuring equal access to fertility

treatment and preservation across England. Partners who are transgender men, or non-binary people assigned female at birth, fall within the NICE definition of same-sex couples, as they require Intrauterine Insemination as a first line of treatment. The Women's Health Strategy has ambitions to improve variations in access to National Health Service funded fertility services. Commitments in the Strategy in respect of same sex couples include these groups.

#### ■ **IVF: LGBT+ People**

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[125207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Women's Health Strategy for England, published on 30 August 2022, CP 736, how many and what proportion of integrated care boards have policies that provide equitable IVF access to female same-sex couples.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The information requested is not collected centrally.

#### ■ **Mental Health Services**

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[125277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the consultation on its Mental health and wellbeing plan, which closed on 7 July 2022.

**Maria Caulfield:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion on 15 November 2022 to Question [82233](#).

#### ■ **NHS: Disclosure of Information**

**Helen Hayes:** [\[125422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had recent discussions with (a) NHS England and (b) NHS Trusts on whistleblowing.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Department has frequent engagement with stakeholders involved in whistleblowing and speaking up, including NHS England and the National Guardian's Office. The Department does not regularly engage directly with National Health Service trusts on whistleblowing but rather works through NHS England and the National Guardian's Office to drive improvement. Both NHS England and the National Guardian's Office have direct engagement with NHS trusts.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[125423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of trends in the level of whistleblowing cases within the NHS in the last three years.



**Maria Caulfield:**

There are no plans to make an assessment. Data on whistleblowing incidents in the National Health Service is not collected centrally.

■ **Obesity**

**Damien Moore:** [\[125484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to help reduce obesity in the United Kingdom.

**Neil O'Brien:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the Rt hon. Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford on 19 December 2022 to Question [109450](#).

■ **Obesity: Children**

**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[119899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to address child obesity rates.

**Neil O'Brien:**

*[Holding answer 16 January 2023]:* 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. 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.

In addition, we are supporting more than three million children through the Healthy Foods Schemes and helping schools boost physical activity to help children maintain a healthy weight and good overall health through the Primary School PE and Sport Premium and the School Games Organiser Network.

■ **Pregnancy**

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[122033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the efficacy of NHS guidelines on managing ovarian cysts during pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists currently publish guidelines for the management of ovarian cysts in both pre- and post-menopausal women. The presence of an ovarian cyst can come to light during pregnancy either because of symptoms or as an incidental finding during routine ultrasonography.

Ovarian cysts are common in pregnancy and are usually small and of no clinical significance. While the guidelines do not specifically include pregnant women, care in pregnancy is largely the same as outside pregnancy in that it is individualised

depending on clinical presentation and whether ultrasound scans identify concerning features requiring further investigation or intervention. Where appropriate, surgical intervention occurs after delivery of the baby, although can occur during pregnancy when urgent. Optimal care is provided by multidisciplinary teams involving gynaecology, radiology, obstetric and midwifery input.

#### ■ **Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[120933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will review the Quality Outcomes Framework to incorporate updates to the Valproate Pregnancy Prevention Program announced by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency,

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 16 January 2023]:* Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) clinical indicators are subject to approval by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and are underpinned by NICE clinical guidelines. Any changes to the QOF are subject to consultation with the General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association.

#### ■ **Public Health: Finance**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[125399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to announce the public health budget allocations for 2023-24.

**Neil O'Brien:**

We will announce the 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[125403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a five-year plan for public health funding.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Spending Review 2021 set plans for Government funding for the years 2022/23 to 2024/25. It confirmed that the Public Health Grant will increase over the settlement period, in addition to a wider package of specific investment in excess of £700 million to improve the start for life offer and support improvements in the quality and capacity of drug treatment.

The Autumn Statement made an additional £8 billion available for the National Health Service and adult social care in England in 2024/25. This funding follows the spending review settlement and means the NHS budget will be £165.9 billion in 2024/25, up from £123.7 billion in 2019/20. The Government has also provided continued and significant support to our health and care system to manage the

effects of Coronavirus, we spent £43 billion on additional revenue costs in 2020/21, with around £39 billion provided for 2021/22.

Any plans for funding beyond this will be subject to future Spending Reviews.

## ■ **Respiratory System: Diseases**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[125402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of increased energy bills on the prevalence of respiratory illness.

**Neil O'Brien:**

The Government recognises that rising energy prices can make it more difficult for people to heat their homes and that cold homes can have an adverse impact on the health of vulnerable population groups, particularly those with existing respiratory conditions.

We are providing a £37 billion package of cost-of-living support to help households and businesses this winter, including a £15 billion targeted package of direct support for the most vulnerable households. A further funding package worth £26 billion will provide support to the most vulnerable households in 2023/24.

## ■ **Steroid Drugs: Misuse**

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[124141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Health and Social Care Committee's report entitled The impact of body image on mental and physical health, published on 2 Aug 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of that report's recommendations on (a) commissioning a review and (b) awareness campaign on safe anabolic steroid use.

**Maria Caulfield:**

No assessment has been made. The recommendation in question is a matter for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The full Government response to the Health and Social Care Committee's report will be published in early 2023.

## ■ **Transplant Surgery**

**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[125312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government is taking steps to help prevent transplant tourism by UK nationals.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government is taking a number of steps to help prevent commercial transplant tourism by United Kingdom nationals. Last year, we amended the Health and Care Act to make it an offence for residents of Great Britain and most UK nationals to pay for the supply of an organ, pay for an offer to supply an organ, or seek somebody willing to supply an organ for payment anywhere in the world.

The Government is now working closely with NHS Blood and Transplant, the Human Tissue Authority, National Crime Agency, Crown Prosecution Service and others to build the UK's capacity to identify, investigate and prosecute transplant tourists and anyone else involved in organ trafficking or in the trafficking in persons for their organs. This work, combined with long-term efforts to improve the supply of ethically retrieved organs for transplantation, will help to remove any incentives for UK patients to purchase an organ overseas.

## ■ Weather: Death

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[125400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Official Statistics, Excess mortality in England and English region, updated on 12 January 2023, whether he has made an assessment of trends in the causes of excess deaths over winter 2022/23; and if he will publish a list of the principal causes of excess deaths to date.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Excess deaths are the difference between the actual registered number of deaths and the expected deaths based on data for previous years. There are a wide range of estimates from different bodies including the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), using different methodologies. The OHID estimates of excess mortality published on 12 January 2023 use the trend in mortality rates from 2015 to 2019 to estimate expected deaths. They adjust for population growth and ageing. This provides further insight on the causes of death driving the excess mortality over 2022. It is likely that a combination of factors has contributed to excess deaths over winter 2022/23, including high flu prevalence, cold weather, the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

## HOME OFFICE

## ■ Airports: Security

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[125362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of staff who screen inbound packages at UK airports.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[125363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to take steps to review the number of staff who use specialist scanners to screen inbound packages at UK airports.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Our utmost priority is protecting the safety and health of the public: we will not compromise on border security and remain absolutely committed to keeping the

border secure. Resource and staffing requirements at every port are continually reviewed by Border Force and resources are deployed flexibly as and when they are required. Through intelligence and data, resources are deployed dynamically to meet any emerging threats.

## ■ **Drugs: Misuse**

**Crispin Blunt:** [R] [125218]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the Home Office rejected the long term recommendations made by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to mitigate barriers to research in December 2017.

**Chris Philp:**

The then Government responded to the advice provided by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in 2017, "Legitimate Use of Controlled Drugs: Research and Healthcare", in 2019.

The response sets out the Government's view of each recommendation. The response was published on Gov.uk and is available at the following link: [Legitimate use of controlled drugs: research and healthcare - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644444/legitimate-use-of-controlled-drugs-research-and-healthcare-2019.pdf)

## ■ **Fraud: Victims**

**Jim Shannon:** [120966]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government offers financial support for victims of fraud.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Government recognises the growing threat posed to consumers by Authorised Push Payment (APP) fraud, with increasingly sophisticated scams that can be detrimental to people's lives.

Since 2016, the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) and the payments industry have worked together to both prevent payments fraud, and to develop better mechanisms for reimbursing victims of APP fraud. This has included introducing the voluntary Contingent Reimbursement Model (CRM) Code in 2019. Under the Code, signatory payment service providers voluntarily reimburse APP victims. The government recognised and welcomed these developments.

However, reimbursement to victims of APP scams remains inconsistent. The Government is committed to tackling fraud within payments networks. That is why the Government has introduced legislation as part of the Financial Services & Markets Bill to enable the Payment Systems Regulator to require payment service providers (including banks) to reimburse APP scam victims. The Government believes this will ensure more consistent and comprehensive reimbursement for future APP scam victims

## ■ Immigration

**Ian Murray:**

[\[117563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the case of Independent Monitoring Authority v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2022] EWHC 3274 (Admin), of 21 December 2022, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of that judgment; whether she plans to allow people with leave to remain to freely travel to the UK; and if she will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Government does not agree with the High Court judgment of 21 December in the judicial review proceedings brought by the Independent Monitoring Authority relating to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and intends to appeal. It would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

EUSS pre-settled status holders should continue to apply for settled status as soon as they are eligible.

EUSS documentary requirements for travel to the UK are unchanged. Visa nationals with EUSS status should use a valid Biometric Residence Card in conjunction with their passport. EEA and Swiss nationals with EUSS status can travel with a valid passport or national ID card, and other non-visa nationals with status can travel with their valid passport.

## ■ Immigration: Public Appointments

**Catherine West:**

[\[120991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on the appointment of a migrants commissioner; and what is the timeline for their appointment.

**Robert Jenrick:**

A range of options have been considered for delivering the Windrush recommendations, including discussions with external stakeholders. The Home Office is taking steps to be more transparent to ensure that the department is as open as possible to all types of scrutiny, both internal and external. This requires a fundamental cultural shift in our attitude to people with different views on policy and those who make a complaint when something goes wrong.

We will keep the Home Affairs Select Committee updated on the progress of all the Wendy Williams recommendations.

## ■ Intelligence Services: Research

**John Healey:**

[\[123858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the annual research and development budget was of the intelligence agencies in each year since 2010.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The budget for the Security and Intelligence Agencies is paid through the Single Intelligence Account (SIA). This is published on an annual basis. The total budgets since 2010 are:

*2021/22 - £4.12 billion*

*2020/21 - £3.72 billion*

*2019/20 - £3.49 billion*

*2018/19 – £3.22 billion*

*2017/18 – £3.02 billion*

*2016/17 - £2.92 billion*

*2015/16 – £2.93 billion*

*2014/15 - £2.63 billion*

*2013/14 - £2.52 billion*

*2012/13 - £2.54 billion*

*2011/12 - £2.38 billion*

*2010/11 - £2.01 billion*

We do not publish break downs on research and development expenditure for national security reasons. Security and Intelligence Agency budgets are audited by the National Audit Office and expenditure is scrutinised by the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

**■ Internet: Hate Crime****Luke Pollard:**[\[124077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the number of (a) internet users in the UK accessing violent misogynistic content online and (b) posts online promoting violent misogyny.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Home Office invests in research and analysis to better understand the scale and challenge of violent online misogyny. However, it is difficult to provide a reliable estimate of the number of users accessing violent misogynistic content or the number of posts online promoting violent misogyny as this content is found across a broad range of platforms, including mainstream and closed spaces, and is often the subject of moderation by the platforms, or attempts by users to circumvent detection.

The Online Safety Bill will mean that alongside removing illegal content, companies must be clear and transparent in their terms and conditions on which types of legal content they will allow on their platforms and uphold this consistently. If a platform does not allow hateful or abusive speech, they must remove this content when they

become aware of it. Companies will be held to account by Ofcom and could face significant fines if they fail to fulfil their duties to protect users.

### ■ **Investigatory Powers Act 2016**

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[123965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to prepare a report on the operation of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, in accordance with section 260 of that Act.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The Home Office carried out an internal review into the operation of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 last year to inform the Home Secretary's Report as required by Section 260. This report will be published and laid in Parliament in due course. A final copy of the report will be shared with the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and Intelligence and Security Committee ahead of publication. This Report aims to assess, as far as possible, the extent to which the objectives of the Act continue to be met and whether any changes are required to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

To complement this process, and noting the value of the independent scrutiny that informed the passage of the 2016 Act, the Home Secretary has decided to appoint Lord Anderson KBE KC to conduct a separate review into aspects of the Act to inform any potential legislative change. Lord Anderson will carry out his own consultation with law enforcement, the intelligence agencies, and wider public authorities, as well as other external organisations and individuals with an interest in this work.

### ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[125461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the email of 29 November 2022 sent to the urgent queries inbox from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton on Princes Verukiruaije Tjozongoro.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 18 January 2023.

### ■ **Psilocybin: Health Hazards**

**Crispin Blunt:**

[R] [\[125217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 2168 on Psilocybin: Health Hazards, in the context of psilocybin being classified under Schedule 1 of the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, for what reason substance 2-CB falls under Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, when it is controlled under Schedule 2 of the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971.



**Chris Philp:**

2C-B (4-Bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine), is controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 as a Class A drug, and placed in Schedule 1 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (“the 2001 Regulations”). Drugs are designated and placed in Schedule 1 to the 2001 Regulations if they have no recognised therapeutic use in the UK, as is currently the case for 2C-B.

There is an established process for the development of medicines, which enables medicines (including those containing Schedule 1 drugs such as 2C-B) to be developed, evaluated in clinical trials and licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA), based on an assessment of their safety, quality and efficacy.

Should a company apply for a marketing authorisation (a product licence), it will ultimately be a decision for the MHRA whether to license a 2C-B-based medicine as a therapy. If a 2C-B-based medicine is made available following an assessment of its quality, safety and efficacy by the MHRA, the Home Office will seek and then consider advice provided by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) on its scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 as soon as possible. Such advice is a statutory requirement and will be considered before any decision is taken on scheduling under the 2001 Regulations.

**■ Radicalism: Young People****Luke Pollard:**[\[122498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce a national strategy on incel culture to tackle the radicalisation of young people.

**Luke Pollard:**[\[122499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many civil servants in her Department are responsible for supporting work on deterring the radicalisation of young people with incel ideology; and what budget is allocated for that purpose.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

Prevent aims to protect people from radicalisation and provides appropriate support to people regardless of ideology. This can include individuals who have shown an interest in incel narratives. People who are referred to Prevent for incel-related concerns will receive tailored support just as they would for any other ideological issue.

Prevent is threat agnostic and is designed to tackle radicalisation across all ideologies, and so staff resource and budget are not specifically allocated against any particular type of ideology or threat.

Statistics related to individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme between April 2021 to March 2022 are due to be published on Thursday 26th January 2023. For the first time these statistics will include a separate category for Incel related referrals. The statistics will be available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2021-to-march-2022>

Prevent continues to monitor emerging radicalisation trends and ideologies that may pose a threat, and establishing whether or not they pose a terrorism risk.

## ■ Visas: Foreign Investment in UK

**Dame Margaret Hodge:** [\[122028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish the Government's Review into people who had entered the UK under the Tier 1 (Investor) immigration route between 30 June 2008 and 6 April 2015.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

We have published key findings from the review. The review gathered information on high-risk individuals, including from law enforcement partners.

To protect operational sensitivities in the law enforcement process, we will not make any further comment, at the request of agencies.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Department for International Trade: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[118895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December 2022 to Question 109493 on Department for International Trade: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, what the name was of the hotel at which Lord Faulkner hosted the lunch; how many individuals attended that lunch; and how many of those were (a) UK officials or (b) business people.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for International Trade does not disclose the names of hotels used by either officials or ministers for security reasons. However, a total of ten individuals attended the lunch, including Lord Faulkner. Of the ten attendees, five were UK officials, one was Lord Faulkner himself and the remaining four were officials from the Taiwan Representative Office.

### ■ Department for International Trade: Written Questions

**Jessica Morden:** [\[122091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named-day written questions their Department answered on time in 2022.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The proportion of written parliamentary questions answered on time by the Department for International Trade in 2022 is as follows:

Ordinary: 62%

Named Day: 51%

## ■ Elbit Systems UK: Exports

**John McDonnell:**

[\[122411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department holds information on whether any equipment that has been exported by Elbit to Israel has been re-exported by (a) Elbit Israel and (b) subsidiaries of Elbit Israel as (i) whole military systems or (ii) components in Elbit Israel's military exports to (A) countries which are Human Rights Priority countries for the Government (B) countries which are in conflict with other states and (C) countries to which the direct export of that equipment from the UK would constitute a violation of (I) the UN's Arms Embargo list or (II) the UK's Strategic Exporting Licence Criteria.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Exporters are required to advise His Majesty's Government of the ultimate end user of their goods, to the extent that is known at the time of their application. The government's assessment and decision will take into account the end user and ultimate end user. We will not issue a licence where to do so would be inconsistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, including where it would breach sanctions or where exports could contribute to or undermine regional peace and security. Information about export licences is published quarterly as official statistics on Gov.uk. My Department only holds comprehensive information about exports from the UK which are subject to controls and have an export licence. We do not hold detailed or specific information about all exports from the UK. We do not hold any information on exports from Israel.

**John McDonnell:**

[\[122412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department holds any information about assurances provided to the Government by the government of Israel that equipment exported to Israel from the UK by Elbit has not been re-exported to other countries.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Export licence applications are supported by an end user undertaking that sets out the specific purposes for which the goods are to be used by the end user, including if applicable, where the goods are being incorporated and or re-exported. This includes an undertaking not to re-export goods for weapons of mass destruction purposes where to do so would breach UK international obligations.

## ■ Exports

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:**

[\[119255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the value was of (a) goods and (b) services exported from each English region in the period between 2020 and 2022.

**Andrew Bowie:**

*[Holding answer 12 January 2023]:* Trade in goods data by English region is published by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the latest data available is up to September 2022. Trade in services data by English region is published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the latest data available is for 2020. The HMRC and ONS data sources cannot be combined due to differences in methodologies.

The HMRC data for goods exports is available here:

[https://www.uktradeinfo.com/media/o2mddj5d/rts\\_q3\\_2022.xlsx](https://www.uktradeinfo.com/media/o2mddj5d/rts_q3_2022.xlsx)

The ONS data for services exports is available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/internationaltrade/datasets/subnationaltradeinservices>

### ■ Exports: Telephone Services

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[121032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many questions the Export Support Team has (a) received and (b) answered in each month since its creation.

**Andrew Bowie:**

From launch to 30 November 2022, the Export Support Service (ESS) has received 12,193 enquiries, of which 12,138 (99.5%) are closed enquiries. Enquiry volumes separated by month, are provided in the table.

MONTH	(A) TOTAL ENQUIRIES	(B) TOTAL CLOSED ENQUIRIES
Pre - Oct 21*	185	185
Oct-21	1028	1028
Nov-21	1177	1177
Dec-21	846	846
Jan-22	1165	1165
Feb-22	1186	1186
Mar-22	2828	2828
Apr-22	748	748
May-22	604	602
Jun-22	526	524
Jul-22	441	439
Aug-22	422	421
Sep-22	402	401

MONTH	(A) TOTAL ENQUIRIES	(B) TOTAL CLOSED ENQUIRIES
Oct-22	303	299
Nov-22	332	289

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[121033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of business awareness of and satisfaction with the advice and support offered by the Export Support Team.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The Department is in the process of collecting evidence on the services' performance and satisfaction, in line with the principles set out in our published Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and the analytical framework underpinning the department's Export Strategy. Additionally, the Export Support Service (ESS) was introduced into the Export Client Survey (ECS) in April 2022 which measures overall satisfaction.

#### ■ Iron and Steel: Russia

**Bill Esterson:** [\[122452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has made an estimate of the volumes of Russian steel potentially entering the UK after being processed in third countries.

**Andrew Bowie:**

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave him on 17 January 2023, UIN 119982.

#### ■ Paraquat: Exports

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[123963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has had recent discussions with the (a) Health and Safety Executive and (b) Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the export of paraquat.

**Andrew Bowie:**

The Secretary of State for International Trade has not had any recent discussions with the Health and Safety Executive or the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the export of paraquat.

#### ■ Trade Agreements: Dispute Resolution

**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[123964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has included the potential implications of the Government's net zero policy in her Department's internal analysis of the cost-benefit of investor state dispute settlements.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) does not hinder the Government's ability to regulate in the public interest, including with regards to the environment. The right to regulate is also recognised in international law.

The UK has around 90 bilateral investment treaties in place with other countries and there has never been a successful ISDS claim brought against the UK, nor has the threat of potential claims affected the Government's legislative programme.

**Trade Agreements: USA****Chi Onwurah:**[\[123935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what progress has been made on implementing the actions agreed at the U.S./UK Dialogues on Future of Atlantic Trade, which took place in Baltimore in March 2022.

**Greg Hands:**

At the UK-U.S. Dialogues, the UK and US agreed to further strengthen our bilateral trade through new cooperation on digital trade, securing supply chains, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Government have since held US-UK SME Dialogues in Boston in June and Edinburgh in November, where we agreed to take forward joint projects on SME tools to support UK and US firms.

In the past year the Government has worked with the US to open market access and improve the trading landscape, successfully securing the removal of Section 232 tariffs on UK steel and aluminium and the long-standing US ban on the import of British lamb.

**JUSTICE****Cardiff Prison: Drugs****Jo Stevens:**[\[125392\]](#)

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

**Jo Stevens:**[\[125393\]](#)

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

**Jo Stevens:**[\[125394\]](#)

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

**Jo Stevens:** [\[125395\]](#)

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

**Jo Stevens:** [\[125396\]](#)

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

**Damian Hinds:**

HMPPS is committed to reducing the supply and demand of drugs in prisons, delivering a high-quality treatment and recovery system, and reducing the harms drugs cause, including working closely with the privately managed HMP/YOI Parc. The following steps are being taken to help reduce drug use in prisons in Wales:

Restricting the supply of drugs:

- Increasing investments in prison security, including introducing airport-style gate security to identify items such as drugs before they are conveyed into prisons as well as X-ray body scanners to find internally concealed items and x-ray baggage.
- Increasing the number of drug trace detection machines, helping prevent the smuggling of illegal drugs, including through the mail.
- Increasing the number and availability of specialist staff, drugs dogs and security equipment to help identify illicit substances at the first possible opportunity available across all sites.
- Mandatory Drug tests in line with national guidance.
- A Crime in Prisons initiative to support the prosecution of those involved in the trafficking of illicit substances.
- Preventing and pursuing incidents of staff corruption.

Reducing the demand for drugs:

- Increasing opportunity for purposeful activities in prison to reduce boredom and in turn the temptation to engage in illicit substances through education and employment.
- Providing opportunities for prisoners to rehabilitate and resettle positively on release through meaningful employment, appropriate housing, mental health support.

Building recovery and reducing harm from drugs:

- Providing opportunities for individuals to engage in Psychosocial Interventions to reduce substance misuse.
- Providing all suitable individuals with appropriate clinical interventions for substance misuse. In Wales, this includes Buvidal which is a long-acting buprenorphine to treat dependence on opioids.

- Providing Naloxone upon release, alongside associated training, to help prevent accidental overdose incidents.
- Providing harm reduction advice about safer substance use and preventing blood borne viruses.
- Providing individuals in all Welsh prisons with the opportunity to live on an incentivised substance-free living wing designed to support people to lead a substance-free life.
- Exploring options for opening a drug recovery wing in HMP Berwyn to support those misusing opiates to abstain from drugs. Two drug recovery units have already been established at HMP/YOI Parc.
- Providing 24/7 support to prisoners via peer mentors and staff.
- Providing continuity of care through the gate care via collaborative working with agencies such as Dyfodol, NHS and Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous.

#### ■ Domestic Abuse: Courts

**Ellie Reeves:**

[125452]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many specialist domestic abuse courts there are in England and Wales; where these courts are located; and how many cases were held at each court in each of the last three years.

**Mike Freer:**

HM Courts and Tribunals Service does not hold data specifically on specialist domestic abuse court numbers, locations or caseloads. Instead, where relevant domestic abuse proceedings are concerned, each magistrates' court across England and Wales is expected to operate in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework.

#### ■ Prisoners

**Steve Reed:**

[125373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he next plans to publish prison population statistics.

**Damian Hinds:**

Headline prison population figures are published weekly, and establishment-level population and capacity figures are published monthly. They can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-population-statistics>.

#### ■ Prisons: Energy Supply

**Greg Smith:**

[125503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of works with (a) UK Power Networks and (b) other electrical supply contractors to install additional power to the (i) HMP Grendon and (ii) HMP Springhill site



area; and how much and what proportion of that cost is for use by (A) existing prisons and (B) planned prisons which do not have planning permission.

**Damian Hinds:**

Negotiations are ongoing with UK Power Network and Western Power Distribution; any estimates are commercially sensitive, and their release would risk prejudicing our negotiating position.

## LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

### ■ Coastal Areas: Finance

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[125523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has for funding for coastal communities.

**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[125524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has plans to support industrial maritime projects in coastal communities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Government is committed to coastal communities and levelling-up across the UK. Our coastal economies and communities add unique value to the country and offer significant growth potential.

Seven out of the eight English Freeports are in coastal areas. Furthermore, the UK and the Scottish Government recently confirmed that Opportunity Inverness and Cromarty Firth and the Firth and Forth were successful in their bids to establish new Green Freeports, and we will shortly be announcing the outcome of the Freeport competition in Wales. Through a broad package of policy incentives – encompassing generous tax reliefs, public funding for infrastructure upgrades, and government support – Freeports will catalyse investment into coastal communities and drive job creation, including in maritime industries. The Government is working closely with the Welsh Government on this programme.

22 coastal towns are in receipt of Town Deals, and coastal areas will benefit from over £673 million of investment via the Towns Fund. The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund will unlock further economic growth in coastal communities with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the fund. Further funding was allocated today via the Levelling Up Fund Round 2, details of which were set out by written ministerial statement.

The Department for Transport recently announced £206 million for the UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions (UK SHORE) marking the biggest government investment ever in our commercial maritime sector.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Housing

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[121090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to provide financial support to victims of domestic of violence to help them find alternative accommodation so that they are protected from abuse and harm.

**Felicity Buchan:**

This Government is committed to the delivery of safe accommodation with support for all victims of domestic abuse. This is part of the Government's overall Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

The Domestic Abuse Act includes new duties on local authorities in England, which came into force on 1 October 2021, to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

So far, we have distributed £250 million to local authorities for the delivery of their duties - £125 million in both 2021/22 and 2022/23. On 12 December 2022 we announced a further two years of government funding - £127.3 million and £129.7 million for the delivery of these duties in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

This is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland.

## ■ European Regional Development Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

[\[122083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Answer of 30 November 2022 to Question 93487, whether any funding from the European Regional Development Fund was available for spending on UK programmes in 2020-2021.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Yes, funding is available up until the end of 2023.

## ■ First Time Buyers

**Mike Amesbury:**

[\[122253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on whether properties purchased using funding under the First Homes scheme have been repossessed as a result of mortgage default in (a) England, (b) Cheshire and (c) Weaver Vale constituency.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

## ■ Parking: Suicide

**Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[125255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the use of multi-storey car park buildings for suicide attempts in each of the last 10 years; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to reduce the risk of such buildings being used for suicide.

**Dame Angela Eagle:** [\[125256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has considered the potential merits of taking steps to improve the safety of multi-storey car parks.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Government is in the process of setting up a new Building Safety Regulator, one of whose duties will be to keep under review the safety of all buildings, including those containing car parks.

The Department is aware of a number of very sad cases of falling from multi story car parks but does not have historic statistics. I would be happy to receive further information or representations from honourable Members on this matter to pass to the Building Safety Regulator to consider in more detail.

## ■ Private Rented Housing

**Hilary Benn:** [\[122066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to review legislation on the rights and protections of lodgers in private houses.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Where parties have entered into a contract in relation to lodging arrangements, the parties are legally bound to comply with the terms of the contract, including any terms related to the giving and receiving of notice. If the Rt Hon member has further suggestions he is welcome to write to me with them.

## ■ Private Rented Housing: Newcastle upon Tyne Central

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[120976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of trends in the levels of bidding for properties in the private rental sector in the last 12 months; and what steps his Department is taking to help prevent rental inflation in the private rented sector in Newcastle upon Tyne Central constituency.

**Felicity Buchan:**

Letting agents and landlords must be transparent and open about pricing of properties.

Our White Paper 'A Fairer Private Rented Sector' which sets out our plan to reform the sector and level up housing quality in this country. These measures will help prevent unfair rent increases for tenants, in Newcastle upon Tyne and across England, while ensuring landlords can continue to make necessary changes to rent.

## ■ **Regional Planning and Development: Carbon Emissions**

**Stephen Hammond:**

[\[122107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Institution of Civil Engineers' policy position statement entitled Defining the outcomes from levelling up, published on 16 June 2022, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill of that statement's position that there should be clearer alignment between levelling up and net zero.

**Lucy Frazer:**

We welcome the Institution of Civil Engineer's engagement on these two vital Government priorities. As highlighted in the Levelling Up White Paper, the largest industrial emitting sectors are in some of the least prosperous areas in the UK, where investment in the transition to Net Zero can potentially yield significant benefits for businesses and communities.

We are keen to harness the opportunity that the Net Zero transition presents to level up the UK. That is why we have established a Green Jobs Delivery Group in collaboration with industry and energy leaders, to support the delivery of 480,000 new green jobs by 2030. The Group will help ensure the UK has the skilled workforce it needs to build clean industries, whilst making sure that workers, businesses and local areas are supported throughout the transition. The Government also looks forward to responding to the Skidmore Review, which sets out recommendations on the interaction between Net Zero, levelling up and local leadership.

## ■ **Voting Methods: Visual Impairment**

**Dr Lisa Cameron:**

[\[121031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to trial new accessible voting devices to ensure that all blind and partially sighted people can vote independently and in secret.

**Lee Rowley:**

The Elections Act 2022 is improving the way support is provided to disabled voters and places a duty on Returning Officers to provide assistive equipment in polling stations, wherever reasonable, to support voters with a wide range of disabilities, taking account of people's varying needs. The Electoral Commission are producing statutory guidance to support Returning Officers to carry out this new duty, which is currently undergoing statutory consultation. This is an area the Government keeps under review and we are aware of some organisations developing devices aimed at supporting voters with sight loss. We will be interested to engage with suppliers, the elections community and representative organisations in considering the

effectiveness of these, and any other products, to support disabled voters participate better in the democratic process.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ **Bus Services: Disability**

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[125278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward regulations under the Bus Services Act 2017 to require bus operators to provide (a) audible and (b) visual information on all bus services on the (i) next stop and (ii) final destination of that service.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

I want to ensure that disabled people have the confidence to travel by bus and recognise that audible and visual information supports that. I remain committed to making Accessible Information Regulations, so that passengers can begin benefitting from audible and visible route and stop information as soon as possible.

### ■ **Cycling and Walking: Finance**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[121123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a multi-year settlement for the Active Travel Fund 4.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has announced its strategy for investing in active travel and has no plans to change that approach.

### ■ **Electric Scooters**

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[121117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to fully legalise the use of e-scooters before the next General Election.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Department intends to create a Low-speed Zero Emission Vehicle (LZEV) category that is independent from the cycle and motor vehicle categories, when parliamentary time allows.

### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Registration**

**Mohammad Yasin:**

[\[122207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing ownership records, alongside registered keeper details, on V5C documents.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) maintains a register of vehicles and their keepers in the United Kingdom. The purpose of the vehicle register is to assist in revenue collection, road safety, law enforcement and to record who is responsible for the vehicle's day-to-day use. The vehicle register held by the DVLA, is not a register of legal title or ownership of vehicles.

The registered keeper of a vehicle can be an individual or a corporate organisation, and they are legally responsible for notifying the DVLA that they have disposed of the vehicle and for notifying them who the new keeper is. Based on the latest available data, the DVLA is confident that just over 92% of the keepers on record are contactable and traceable based on the information held.

**■ Northern Transport Acceleration Council**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[125418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the workplan of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[125419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when a minister last attended a meeting of the Northern Transport Acceleration Council.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[125420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Northern Transport Acceleration Council (a) last met and (b) will next meet.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Northern Transport Acceleration Council last met on 23 May 2022 with a focus on the UK Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of State and the Ministers for Decarbonisation, Rail, Roads and Local Transport, and HS2.

Ministers and the Secretary of State are currently reviewing the format and structure of regular engagement in north, including the role to be played by the Northern Transport Acceleration Council. As a result, there is no formal workplan in place for the council at this moment in time.

**■ Railways: Disability**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[125456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made on updating the Design Standards for Accessible Stations as outlined in the National Disability Strategy.

**Huw Merriman:**

I am currently considering content for a public consultation to be launched during Spring 2023, which will be an important first step in revising the Design Standards for

Accessible Stations. I will ensure that the hon member is personally notified when this consultation is launched.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[125457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to deliver the National Rail Accessibility Strategy outlined in the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail.

**Huw Merriman:**

The National Rail Accessibility strategy is being developed and will be published in due course.

#### ■ Railways: Kingston upon Hull

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[122435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of cancelled planned rail services effecting journeys to and from Hull in 2022.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[122438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with TransPennine Express on its recent operational performance.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department, which manages TransPennine Express's contract in partnership with Transport for the North through the Rail North Partnership, is in regular dialogue with the operator to stabilise the current service provision (which has been affected by high levels of absence, a lack of rest day working and overtime, and industrial action) and then return services to a fuller and reliable timetable.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[122436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of plans to increase rail fares in 2023 on passengers from Hull.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Government recognises the challenges passengers are facing this year with the cost of living, including those travelling to and from Hull. This is why we have delivered the biggest Government intervention on rail fares since privatisation, by capping increases to regulated fares at 5.9 per cent, 6.4 percentage points below July 2022's Retail Prices Index figure.

#### ■ Railways: Stockport

**Navendu Mishra:** [\[125510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies of trends in the number of cancelled rail services to and from Stockport station in 2022.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department recognises the importance of a high performing railway in contributing to growth and local economies. On 11 December, Avanti West Coast

implemented a timetable that restored pre-pandemic service between Manchester and London (three trains per hour). Importantly, these services are designed not to be dependent on rest day working. The Department looks to the trade unions to work with train operators and Network Rail as the employers to resolve these issues for the benefit of communities such as Stockport.

## ■ Railways: Timetables

**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[122437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the new train timetable on reliability of rail operators.

**Huw Merriman:**

The December 2022 timetable was designed to improve performance, particularly through some of the busiest parts of the network.

Since it was introduced, the network has faced considerable challenges, with poor weather (snow, ice, wind and heavy rain), sustained industrial action and a wide-ranging programme of engineering works. The full impact of the timetable on service performance will only become clearer when network disruption stabilises, towards the end of January.

## ■ Roads: Accidents

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[123927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many UK citizens have died in the UK as a result of the actions of a US citizen driver over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[123928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many UK citizens have died in the UK as a result of the actions of a US citizen driver over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[123929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many UK citizens have died in the UK as a result of the action of a US citizen driver over the last 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Andrea Leadsom:** [\[123930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many UK citizens have died in the UK as a result of the actions of a US citizen driver over the last 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The information requested is not held.



## ■ Train Operating Companies: Industrial Relations

**Grahame Morris:** [\[125314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has funded legal representation for train operating companies in relation to a collective bargaining complaint to the Central Arbitration Committee by the RMT Union.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department provides funding to the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to undertake work associated with workforce reform proposals which are necessary to create a sustainable railway in future. RDG has sought legal advice on behalf of train operating companies in relation to the RMT's complaint.

**Grahame Morris:** [\[125315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether contracts for Train Operating Companies require his Department to fund their legal representation for complaints submitted to the Central Arbitration Committee for the non-disclosure of information for collective bargaining purposes by trade unions.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport would be required to reimburse such costs, should they arise, provided they do not arise in circumstances where the operator has acted unlawfully or otherwise failed to comply with its contractual obligations.

**Grahame Morris:** [\[125316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has provided additional funding to Network Rail to compensate for reduced track access charges from train operating companies arising from industrial action.

**Huw Merriman:**

When industrial action by Network Rail employees results in fewer passenger services operating, this has an impact on the amount of variable track access charges paid to Network Rail by train operating companies. Network Rail has thus far been able to offset the impact of reduced income from track access charge through its risk funding. Any requirement for additional funding will be considered through the Supplementary Estimate process.

## ■ UK Border Force: Strikes

**Henry Smith:** [\[122115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Office on border resourcing and resilience planning in light of recent industrial action by UK Border Force staff.

**Jesse Norman:**

Ministers and officials at the Department for Transport engage regularly with the Home Office on a range of topics, including border resourcing. The Department supports Border Force's work to keep UK borders safe and secure and will assist

Government partners to work with industry and provide expertise. During recent industrial action at UK airports in December, the Government ensured that all ports remained open. There was minimal disruption to operations and passengers as a result.

## WALES

### ■ Wales Office: Written Questions

**Jessica Morden:** [\[122102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what proportion of (a) ordinary and (b) named-day written questions their Department answered on time in 2022.

**David T C Davies:**

From 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022, the Wales Office answered the following proportion of written parliamentary questions on time:

(a) Ordinary PQs – **99%**

(b) Named Day PQs – **100%**

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Families

**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[119896\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to respond to recommendations in the Children's Commissioner's report *A positive approach to parenting; Part 2 of the Independent Family Review*.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The Government will respond to the recommendations in the report '*A positive approach to parenting; Part 2 of the Independent Family Review*' in due course.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Duncan Baker:** [\[126836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's steps to increase Pension Credit claims in December 2022.

**Laura Trott:**

We undertook a further burst of communications activity in December which included press, radio and social media. This highlighted that successful Pension Credit applications made by 18 December would mean qualification for a £324 Cost of Living Payment – thanks to Pension Credit backdating rules. To promote this activity,

I held an event at Portcullis House on 7 December. Around 40 MPs attended to show their support and help promote the message in their constituencies.

Internal management information shows that during the week commencing 12 December, DWP received over 7,200 claims. This is 177% higher compared to the same week the year before.

Since the beginning of the Pension Credit awareness campaign in April 2022, weekly Pension Credit claims volumes increased by an average of 73% compared to the year average before the campaign began (April 2021 to March 2022).

A range of other factors are also likely to have impacted claim volumes and it is not therefore possible to attribute the increase to the campaign alone.

This data is based on internal management information which has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics. They are provided here in the interests of transparency.

## ■ Employment

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

[\[122296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise people to return to the labour market.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government is committed to helping people find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market, wherever they are and wherever they live.

Universal Credit has been designed to make work pay and we have comprehensive support in place to help DWP claimants start, stay and succeed in work, including face-to-face time with work coaches and interview assistance. In addition, there is targeted support for groups we know are more likely to be inactive, such as those aged 50+ and disabled people and people with a health condition.

DWP is leading work across government to look in detail at the issue of workforce participation. As only about half of the people who are economically inactive are on a DWP benefit, we are working with other government departments and stakeholders to gather insight and develop new ideas to tackle this issue.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Catherine West:**

[\[124024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the current wait time is between submitting an application for Personal Independent Payment and receiving a decision.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We are committed to ensuring that people can access financial support through Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in a timely manner, and reducing customer journey times for PIP claimants is a priority for the department. We always aim to

make an award decision as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to review all available evidence.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) clearance times are available as part of the PIP Official Statistics quarterly release. The latest release, with data available to October 2022, is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1123400/tables-pip-statistics-to-oct-2022-eng-wales.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1123400/tables-pip-statistics-to-oct-2022-eng-wales.xlsx) .

Table 1A in this release shows that the median average clearance times for normal rules new claims are currently (October 2022) 16 weeks “end to end” (from registration to a decision being made).

**Notes:**

- The status of claims as 'normal rules' and 'new claim' is shown as at the point of the claim registration. It is possible for claims to transition between normal and special rules, and between new claims and reassessments, during the course of the claimant journey;
- The figures in Table 1A are the average clearance time of claims completing the relevant stage of customer journey within that calendar month;
- The 'Registration to DWP decision (end to end)' clearance time is measured as the average time between the date of registration of the claim and the date of the DWP decision to either award or disallow the claim. It does not include claims that were withdrawn by the claimant or claims that were disallowed by DWP pre-referral to the Assessment Providers (e.g., for failure to meet basic eligibility criteria or failure to return the Part 2 form within the time limit);
- The median time is the middle value if you were to order all the times within the distribution from lowest value to highest value. The median is presented here instead of the mean because the mean can be unduly affected by outlying cases (e.g., cases where the person has been hard to reach due to being in prison, hospital, failed to attend the assessment on numerous occasions etc.);
- Data provided is for claimants residing in England and Wales, plus those with unknown or abroad addresses only.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females**

**Dan Carden:**

**[125460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 117888 on State Retirement Pensions: Females, if he will make an assessment of the impact for his policies of the tribunal report by Dr Joceylynn Scutt published on 13 July 2022.

**Laura Trott:**

There are no plans for an assessment to be made.

**■ Universal Credit****Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[122295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to encourage more Universal Credit claimants to move into work.

**Guy Opperman:**

Universal Credit is designed to make work pay. The Government wants people to see their income increase when they start working.

The Department has comprehensive support in place to help UC claimants start, stay and succeed in work, including face-to-face time with work coaches and support with the cost of childcare. In addition, there is targeted support for young people, people aged 50+, disabled people and people with a health condition.

Claimants on work-related benefits are generally expected to undertake certain activities in return for financial support through the benefit system. These requirements help the claimant prepare for, look for and move into work and are tailored to their individual capability and circumstances.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[125364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department will take to minimise the proportion of claimants subject to managed migration whose legacy benefits are terminated without moving to Universal Credit.

**Guy Opperman:**

Following the issue of Migration notices, the Department will issue reminders to claimants during the three-month period if they have not yet made a claim to UC.

If a claimant does not claim by their extended deadline, they will be notified that their current benefit(s) will be terminated, unless they have significant support needs requiring a further extension. For those claimants who require significant support, we hold case conferences with Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders who provide local expertise, working with different organisations to take a multi-agency approach. Where a claimant's legacy benefit(s) has been terminated and they make a claim to UC within one month, their claim can be backdated to their deadline date and still receive Transitional Protection where entitled.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[125365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support Universal Credit recipients whose payments are adversely affected by employer mistakes in reporting earnings to HM Revenue and Customs.

**Guy Opperman:**

The department uses Real Time Information (RTI) supplied by employers to calculate Universal Credit payments in around a million cases a month. This works well for the vast majority of those with employed earnings. It also enables a claimant's award to be adjusted to reflect their earnings, without the need for claimants to report them.

The amounts used are visible to the claimant on their monthly statement. If a claimant thinks this amount is wrong and the employer has made an error, they can submit evidence to us. The Department continues to work closely with HMRC to resolve any individual cases and HMRC advise employers how to correctly report earnings.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

[\[125368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason his Department has delayed the managed migration of benefit recipients claiming only income-based ESA until 2028-29.

**Guy Opperman:**

Employment and Support Allowance claimants are still able to make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe that they will be better off before they are migrated over.

As the Chancellor set out in his Autumn Statement in November, the United Kingdom faces significant economic challenges. The decision to delay the managed migration of the majority of income-based ESA claimants until 2028-29 is estimated to reduce costs by around £1bn over 5 years.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Challenger Tanks

**John Healey:**

[\[122417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January to Question 118815 on Challenger Tanks, how many main battle tanks he plans to upgrade to Challenger 3 each year until the completion of the upgrade programme.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Alex Chalk:**

The Challenger 3 prototypes will be delivered through 2023 and ~~2024~~**early 2025** for use in demonstration trials. Once the design has been proven it is currently planned that the Challenger 3 tanks will be delivered to the Army from 2027, with Full Operating Capability delivered by 2030. The number of tanks to be delivered is under review.

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### ■ Textiles: Recycling

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[97533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 18 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government recognises the environmental impact of the textiles industry, which is why we identified textiles as a priority waste stream in our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy for England

In 2021 Defra funded WRAP's Textiles 2030 programme, a voluntary business initiative with ambitious carbon and water targets. Signatories represent over 62% of clothing put on the UK market

~~We published our response to the consultation on EPR in March 2022. We have no intention at present to extend EPR to textiles~~

We are considering the merits of an EPR scheme within a policy framework while we assess options to reduce waste and the environmental impact of textiles.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Immigration: Public Appointments****Catherine West:****[120991]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on the appointment of a migrants commissioner; and what is the timeline for their appointment.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:**

**Robert Jenrick:**

A range of options have been considered for delivering the Windrush recommendations, including discussions with external stakeholders. The Home Office is taking steps to be more transparent to ensure that the department is as open as possible to all types of scrutiny, both internal and external. ~~This requires a fundamental cultural shift in our attitude to people with different views on policy and those who make a complaint when something goes wrong.~~

We will keep the Home Affairs Select Committee updated on the progress of all the Wendy Williams recommendations.



## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Defibrillators in schools

**Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):**

[\[HCWS506\]](#)

My Noble Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System and Student Finance (Baroness Barran) has made the following statement.

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced that the first deliveries of defibrillators to state-funded schools in England are taking place this week. The programme seeks to ensure that all schools have access to defibrillators. To do this, the department has procured over 20,000 defibrillators for schools, with deliveries expected to be completed over this academic year.

The department has worked with leading charities, including the British Heart Foundation, the Oliver King Foundation, Resuscitation Council UK and St John Ambulance to update its defibrillator guidance. This revised guidance will give schools the tools they need to successfully manage their defibrillators and maximise access, where appropriate. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/automated-external-defibrillators-aeds-in-schools>

In addition, the department is providing awareness videos, showing how simple defibrillators are to use and will be encouraging schools to share these videos in staff meetings and assemblies. By providing defibrillators and raising awareness, this programme will help a generation of young people to feel confident and able to use this life saving equipment.

Research shows that cardiac arrest is more likely to happen during sporting activities. Therefore, secondary schools with two or more defibrillators will also receive an internal cabinet, so that one defibrillator can be placed at the school sports facility. This will ensure that defibrillators are strategically placed where they are most needed and will maximise their availability to the community using the sports facility for clubs and other activities.

Research also shows that broader access to defibrillators is lower in certain areas. To address this, we will be targeting support to primary schools, special schools and alternative provision settings in areas which currently have lower provision who want to make their DfE-funded defibrillators accessible to their local community, an external defibrillator cabinet. This will support greater access to defibrillators for local communities in the areas that need it most.

The procurement for defibrillator cabinets is underway, and we expect deliveries to take place this year. More details will be released once the procurement has concluded.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Government response to the Deposit Return Scheme consultation**

**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**  
[\[HCWS507\]](#)

The Government is publishing its response to the 2021 consultation on Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales.

The consultation confirmed strong public backing, with 83% of respondents including key industry players expressing support for a Deposit Return Scheme for single-use drinks containers. We will proceed with the scheme that covers cans and plastic bottles. The Deposit Return Scheme will boost recycling, significantly reduce drinks containers littered in our environment, and promote a circular economy by making it easier for consumers to recycle. The scheme aims to ensure 85% fewer drinks containers are discarded as litter after three years of its launch.

Today's publication is a critical milestone as it triggers the start for work towards introducing the Deposit Return Scheme in October 2025

Government will take secondary legislation through Parliament to establish the necessary framework and obligations. The Welsh government will take legislation through the Senedd. This will be an industry led scheme, and we will work collaboratively with the relevant sectors to enable industry to establish the organisation, systems and infrastructure to operate a Deposit Return Scheme that will provide a step change in how we manage our waste.

**■ Independent Expert Assessment of Crustacean Mortality in the North-east of England in 2021 and 2022**

**Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):**  
[\[HCWS508\]](#)

Today I am publishing the Independent Expert Assessment of Unusual Crustacean Mortality in the North-east of England in 2021 and 2022 on gov.uk.

The report documents the findings of the independent crustacean mortality expert panel (CMEP) convened by our Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Gideon Henderson.

The panel was convened in December 2022 to provide an independent scientific assessment of all the possible causes of the mass mortality incident using all relevant available data. I would like to thank the members of the panel for their work.

The independent panel concluded that pyridine or another toxic pollutant as the cause was very unlikely as was any link to dredging for the Freeport.

A novel pathogen is considered by the independent panel to be the most likely cause of mortality because it could explain the key observations including mortality over a sustained period and along over 40 miles of coastline, the unusual twitching of dying crabs and the deaths being predominantly crabs rather than other species.

I will consider carefully if further analysis by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) can ascertain conclusively the cause of this unusual mortality.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Third Party Material Consultation Response

#### **The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Safeguarding (Miss Sarah Dines):** **[\[HCWS505\]](#)**

I am pleased to announce that the Government has today published its response to the public consultation on police requests for personal records or 'third party material'. This consultation was a key component on our work to address how the criminal justice system responds to rape.

We launched this consultation to understand more about the issues surrounding police requests for personal records, how often these are unnecessary and disproportionate and how far they have a negative impact on investigation timelines.

I am grateful to all the respondents who came forward with their views and helped us to gain a clearer picture of the problems in this space. Respondents told us that victims of rape and other sexual offences are frequently subject to unnecessary and disproportionate requests for personal records, that police and CPS practice with regards to these kinds of requests are inconsistent and that victim confidence is severely impacted by having their privacy unnecessarily invaded, and by the lengthy investigations that can result from delays in requests for personal records.

The Government is therefore committing to legislation to address the issues of unnecessary and disproportionate requests for third party material when Parliamentary time allows, and to ensuring that victims feel safe to report crime in the knowledge that their private lives will not be unnecessarily invaded.

A copy of the Government response will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and it will also be published on Gov.UK.