



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 25 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

■ Attorney General: Trade Unions

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[127793\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Attorney General's Office has a shared HR service with the Government Legal Department (GLD). The GLD have a joint agreement with the PCS and FDA unions. The GLD enjoys a productive and open relationship with the unions, and fully accepts that the law places a duty on an employer to disclose information for collective bargaining purposes. This may include information without which the Trade Union representative would be materially impeded from carrying out collective bargaining and information which it would be in accordance with good employment relations practice to disclose for the purpose of collective bargaining. The information appropriate for disclosure will vary according to the request but is likely to include some of the following: principles and structures of pay and reward systems; analysis of earnings and hours of work; total pay bill and benefits; terms and conditions of employment; workforce planning statistics; and business outlook. In addition, routine human resources information is shared with recognised trade unions as part of our normal engagement, for example TUs are provided with anonymised workforce data which includes staffing numbers, turnover and activity levels on a monthly basis. There is a range of HR information published on the GOV.UK which is therefore publicly available.

■ Domestic Abuse: Convictions

Steve Reed:

[\[125374\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many people charged with domestic abuse offences had been previously convicted of such offences in each of the last 30 years for which figures are available.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold any data which shows the number of suspects charged with domestic abuse offences after having been previously convicted of similar offences. The CPS does not hold any data on recidivism. Proven reoffending statistics are held, maintained, and published by the Ministry of Justice.

CPS DOMESTIC ABUSE CHARGE VOLUME AND RATE

Financial Year	Charged	% Charged of Legal Decisions
2005-2006	31,392	71.6%
2006-2007	44,917	69.1%
2007-2008	50,089	69.3%
2008-2009	55,509	71.1%
2009-2010	62,087	70.1%
2010-2011	68,927	70.4%
2011-2012	66,186	71.8%
2012-2013	60,190	71.0%
2013-2014	72,905	73.0%
2014-2015	84,711	72.1%
2015-2016	82,158	73.2%
2016-2017	79,417	74.8%
2017-2018	77,726	75.9%
2018-2019	67,469	74.3%
2019-2020	55,567	73.1%
2020-2021	50,838	70.1%
2021-2022	43,836	72.7%

Data Source: CPS Case Management Information System

The official statistics relating to crime and policing are maintained by the Home Office and the official statistics relating to sentencing, criminal court proceedings, offenders

brought to justice, the courts and the judiciary are maintained by the Ministry of Justice.

■ Stalking

Steve Reed:

[\[125375\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many people charged with stalking offences had been previously convicted of such offences in each of the last 30 years for which figures are available.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 created the offence of harassment and latterly, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, stalking. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 came into effect on 25 November 2012 and introduced two new offences of stalking, by way of Section 2A and Section 4A, into the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold any data which shows the number of defendants charged with and prosecuted for offences of stalking or the number of these who were previously convicted of similar offences. However, management information is held showing the number of offences of stalking in which a prosecution commenced from each year from 2013/14. The table below shows the number of these offences to the latest available year, 2021/22.

Year	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Protection from Harassment Act 1997 { 2A(1) and (4) }	529	676	643	510	921	1,246	1,257	1,326	1,741
Protection from Harassment Act 1997 { 4A(1)(a)(b)(i) and (5) }	65	133	128	83	172	313	331	424	563
Protection from Harassment Act 1997 { 4A(1)(a)(b)(ii) and (5) }	149	294	331	366	523	649	700	762	1,046

Data Source: CPS Case Management Information System

The figures relate to the number of offences and not the number of individual defendants. It is often the case that an individual defendant is charged with more than one offence against the same complainant. No data are held showing the final outcome or if the charged offence was the substantive charge at finalisation. The official statistics relating to crime and policing are maintained by the Home Office and the official statistics relating to sentencing, criminal court proceedings, offenders brought to justice, the courts and the judiciary are maintained by the Ministry of Justice.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY■ **Business: Energy**

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[125516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the energy cost needs of businesses that are (a) off grid and (b) rely on alternative fuels such as heating oil and LPG.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave my Rt. Hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan on 15th December 2022 to Question [105337](#).

■ **Copper**

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[125455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason copper is not included on the UK Critical Minerals List 2021.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

In 2022, BEIS commissioned the British Geological Survey to undertake the UK's first criticality assessment. 18 minerals – assessed as having the highest supply risk and highest economic importance – were defined as “critical”. Many other minerals, such as copper, have important uses but, by necessity of focus, only some are defined as “critical”. Supply chain risks can be caused by – for example – rapid demand growth, concentrated supply chains in particular countries or highly volatile prices. Criticality changes over time. The assessment will be reviewed regularly through the Critical Minerals Intelligence Centre. The next review is expected later this year.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992**

Chris Stephens: [R] [\[128668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure his Department's compliance with section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Kevin Hollinrake:

BEIS provides specific HR data/information to DTUS on request in line with our obligations under section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Alongside this, management information is shared with the recognised trade unions as part of normal engagement on a range of issues. Furthermore, BEIS publishes a range of information about the operation of the Department, which is available on GOV.UK and so is publicly available.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Northern Ireland

Jim Shannon:

[\[125361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the £600 payment to Northern Ireland households for energy costs (a) can be split between gas, oil and electric bills or (b) must be used for a single form of energy.

Graham Stuart:

The £600 payment is going to Northern Ireland households with a domestic contract with an electricity supplier. The payment comprises the Energy Bills Support Scheme (£400) and the Alternative Fuel Payment (£200), recognising the widespread use of other fuels for heating in Northern Ireland. The £600 payment can be used for any fuel; direct debit customers receive the payment direct to their bank account. Credit or keypad prepayment meter customers are receiving vouchers which can be redeemed at a Post Office and paid into a bank account. If necessary, the sum can be taken as cash.

■ Energy: Buildings and Industry

Bill Esterson:

[\[128623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the level of energy demand from (a) buildings and (b) industry in the UK, as of 20 January 2023.

Graham Stuart:

Data on UK energy demand is published in Energy Trends table 1.3:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/total-energy-section-1-energy-trends>.

Information for January 2023 is not yet available. Figures include consumption from buildings and processes; these are not separately available. For the latest published 12-month period, October 2021 – September 2022, final consumption for domestic and other final users was 57.1 million tonnes of oil equivalent (mtoe). Final consumption for industry was 21.8 mtoe, excluding energy industry consumption.

Projections for final energy demand by sector are available in Energy & Emissions Projections, Annex F: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-and-emissions-projections-2021-to-2040>.

■ Energy: Meters

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is taking steps to ensure that energy companies conduct appropriate scrutiny of customers they propose to adopt energy pre-payment meters.

Graham Stuart:

Oversight of energy suppliers is for the independent regulator Ofgem. As part of its market-wide Compliance Reviews into Consumers in Payment Difficulty and

Vulnerability, Ofgem engaged with suppliers and sought action to improve processes on prepayment practices.

Rachael Maskell: [\[125416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that Ofgem effectively scrutinises the practice of energy companies moving customers onto energy pre-payment meters.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem has extensive rules in place in relation to protecting prepayment meter customers. Suppliers may only install prepayment meters without consent (force-fitting) to recover debt as a last resort and Ofgem expects all other routes of debt recovery to have been exhausted before a supplier fits a prepay meter. Suppliers must make sure that whenever they install a prepayment meter, they verify that it is safe and reasonably practicable to do so, considering whether a consumer's vulnerability makes a prepayment meter a poor choice, for example where medical equipment is required. This includes when switching a smart meter to prepayment mode.

Rachael Maskell: [\[125417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to prevent energy companies from requiring customers to move onto energy pre-payment meters if those customers (a) do not have children, (b) are disabled or medically unwell and (c) are in a state of economic deprivation and have not provided consent.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem has rules in place that restrict the force-fitting of prepayment meters on consumers in vulnerable situations. Energy suppliers are required to follow specific processes before switching a customer to a prepayment meter. This includes considerations of whether a consumer's vulnerability makes a prepayment meter a poor choice, for example where a consumer is ill or disabled. Ofgem requires all suppliers to provide a Priority Services Register for vulnerable consumers with additional, non-financial needs.

■ Energy: Prices

Kenny MacAskill: [\[124183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent representations he has received on the potential merits of setting a limit to the extra charges, in addition to the regular bill, which can be charged by energy companies on the bills of non-direct debit customers who pay by cash, cheque or over the phone.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS Ministers and officials regularly receive representations on a range of issues relating to energy markets.

Rules set by Ofgem mean suppliers can only charge more for one payment method than another if the price differential is cost reflective. Non-direct debit customers who prefer to receive paper energy bills by post cost more to serve than those with direct debit arrangements. Suppliers also incur charges for these customers to pay their energy bills by cash and cheque at facilities such as the Post Office or Paypoint.

■ Help to Grow Schemes: North East

Chi Onwurah:

[\[125339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2023 to Question 118995 on Help to Grow Schemes: North East, whether data on Help To Grow schemes will be published by March 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Data on the Help to Grow Schemes will be released in Spring 2023 after Help to Grow: Digital has closed.

■ Iron and Steel: Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson:

[\[127749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will support the development and implementation of a net zero emissions steel strategy for the UK.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government's 2021 Net Zero Strategy reaffirms our commitment to continue to work with the steel industry on decarbonisation. We are working with the sector to support its decarbonisation options – including hydrogen based steelmaking technology - and to consider the implications of the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee to 'set targets for ore-based steelmaking to reach near-zero emissions by 2035'.

The appropriate decarbonisation pathway for individual sites will be based on multiple factors and the Government is working closely with companies to support them as they make commercial decisions on the optimum route for their sites.

Bill Esterson:

[\[128624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January to Question 119980, what estimate he has made of the total level of emissions from steel plants in the UK.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The publicly available data, as part of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS), shows monitored emissions from the named installations of the steel primary producers were, in aggregate, 11.8 million tonnes CO₂ in 2021. However, as explained in the Answer of 16 January to Question 119980, ETS emissions are not necessarily the emissions for a whole site – they only cover the site's activities which

are regulated under the ETS. The Government does not hold data on any non-ETS emissions.

■ Iron and Steel: Energy

Bill Esterson: [\[127746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to provide specific support to the steel sector on the cost of energy after March 2023.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government recognises that those in energy and trade intensive industries (ETIIs) are less able to pass higher costs through to their customers, due to international competition. Therefore we have announced a new Energy Bills Discount Scheme from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, with higher discounts given to those with larger energy usage such as steel producers. This is in addition to extensive support we have provided to the steel sector to help with energy costs, worth more than £800m since 2013.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Carbon Emissions

Bill Esterson: [\[127745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to provide specific support for the advanced manufacturing sector with decarbonisation.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government is committed to decarbonising advanced manufacturing in line with our net zero goals, while simultaneously transforming our industrial heartlands by attracting inward investment, future-proofing businesses, and securing high wage, high skill jobs. We are providing around £2 billion of funding to help industry to reduce emissions, save on bills and connect to low carbon infrastructure such as carbon capture technology.

■ Natural Gas

Kenny MacAskill: [\[126823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the number of households which are not connected to the gas grid in (a) the UK, (b) Great Britain, (c) Scotland, (d) England, (e) Wales and (f) Northern Ireland.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS publishes estimates of the [number of domestic properties not connected to the gas network](#) for Great Britain by country, English regions and local authority. This includes properties where a gas grid connection is possible but no connection has been made. For Northern Ireland, data on gas connections is available via the [Annual Retail Energy Market Monitoring Report](#).

■ Nuclear Reactors: EU Law

Stella Creasy:

[\[128639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans he has to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the Nuclear Reactors (Environmental for Decommissioning) Regulations 1999.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy is reviewing all retained EU law in line with usual policy development to determine whether to repeal, replace or preserve it.

The UK will maintain its high standards of nuclear safety and security.

■ Small Businesses: Cost of Living

Bill Esterson:

[\[127747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support he plans to provide to small businesses to assist with the cost of living after March 2023.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Following an HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will continue to provide a discount to eligible businesses between April and March 2024. In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs. Furthermore, the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, will save SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, as well the cut to fuel duty for 12 months and raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000.

■ Strikes

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) strikes and (b) work to rule on potential level of disruption experienced by the services listed in his Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of applying the measures included within the Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Bill to the (a) military and (b) police.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing local NHS trusts to determine suitable minimum service levels for their respective services.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies if minimum service levels agreed on strike days exceed those levels on non-strike days.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill will ensure crucial public services such as rail, ambulance services, and fire services maintain a minimum service during industrial action, reducing risk to lives and livelihoods.

The Department is conducting an economic impact assessment of the Bill. This will be published shortly.

The Bill also sets out a requirement that Departments must consult widely before making minimum service regulations in a relevant area.

The sectors to which this legislation will apply to are named in the Bill. This does not include the military or the police.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Birth Certificates

Hilary Benn:

[\[126549\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the circumstances in which people are required by law to produce or show their birth certificate.

Jeremy Quin:

The requested information is not centrally held by the Cabinet Office.

■ Cabinet Office: Trade Unions

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[127792\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what human resources information his Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128667\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure his Department's compliance with section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Jeremy Quin:

There is a range of HR information which is published on GOV.UK and which is therefore publicly available. In addition, Cabinet Office meets regularly with Trade Union representatives and presents and shares information and data requested on the Cabinet Office workforce, where it is appropriate and in line with our privacy statements to help inform decision making through formal negotiation and meaningful consultation and engagement.

Cabinet Office is therefore complying with section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

■ **Cardiovascular Diseases: Death**

Rachael Maskell: [\[125407\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of excess deaths that can be attributed to (a) strokes and (b) cardiovascular diseases in each of the last three months for which data is available.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 17 January is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response to PQ125407 [PQ125407 (1).pdf]

■ **Foreign Investment in UK: India**

Chi Onwurah: [\[125335\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much direct foreign investment from India was invested in the UK in each year since 1 January 2018.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 17 January is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response to PQ125335 [PQ125335.pdf]

■ **Government Departments: ICT**

Chi Onwurah: [\[125341\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether providers of IT cloud infrastructure to Government bodies are required to report on their investment in R&D in the UK.

Alex Burghart:

There is not a contractual requirement for IT cloud infrastructure providers to report on R&D investment. This is mainly due to cloud providers operating outside of the classical, managed outsourcing model. The cloud providers do, however, publish information on their investment activities in the UK.

■ **Ministers: Legal Opinion**

Angela Rayner: [\[125386\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department provided legal assistance to Cabinet Ministers between January 2022 and January 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

During this period, Cabinet Office ministers and officials were provided with legal support on their departmental responsibilities by lawyers from the Government Legal Department, supplemented by external legal firms and counsel where appropriate.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Food****John Healey:**[\[128596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what data his Department holds on complaints by Armed Forces personnel about the quality of food served in military bases.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to ensuring that Service personnel receive good quality meals and takes any issues very seriously. Any complaints are investigated with our suppliers.

Data on complaints is held at each messing facility. Service personnel can log complaints directly at the point of sale, on customer helpdesks and through their Chain of Command.

Where incidents are escalated, they are captured in regional helpdesks and Key Performance Indicators portals, logs are reviewed weekly by MOD and Contractors.

■ Armed Forces: Homosexuality**Crispin Blunt:**[\[125219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with officials in his Department on the potential impact of the deletion of records of investigations relating to homosexuality in armed forces will have upon Lord Eatheron's review into the treatment of LGBT veterans.

Crispin Blunt:[\[125220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the advice given by Defence Police Chief's Council in 2010 to delete records of investigations and dismissals into Armed Forces service people accused of homosexual conduct.

Crispin Blunt:[\[125221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if will take steps to ensure that previous deletion of records of investigations and dismissals into Armed Forces service people accused of homosexual conduct will not adversely affect (a) potential future claims for compensation, restoration of lost pension entitlements or (b) admissions of fault from his Department.

Crispin Blunt:[\[125222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will investigate for what reasons records of investigations and dismissals into Armed Forces service people accused of homosexual conduct were deleted in 2010.

Crispin Blunt:[\[125223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many veterans had their records relating to disciplinary action due to homosexuality in the Armed Forces destroyed in 2010.

Crispin Blunt:[\[125224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, to specify which legal duty the Ministry of Defence spokesman is referring to in his remark to the BBC on 2nd November with relation to the the deletion of records of investigations relating to homosexuality in Armed Forces.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The historic policy prohibiting homosexuality in the armed forces was wrong and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) deeply regrets LGBT+ members serving in Defence suffered injustice as a consequence. The LGBT Veterans Independent Review (IR), co-commissioned by the MOD and the Office for Veterans' Affairs, launched its Call for Evidence (CfE) on 15 July 2022, where it sought testimony from those impacted by the Armed Force's pre-2000 policy that homosexuality was incompatible with service in the armed forces. As part of this CfE, a testimonial referred to an accusation that in 2010 Service Police records relating to investigations where criminalised homosexuality was a factor had been deleted. Service Police investigative records are routinely and lawfully destroyed, typically between three and 10 years after the offence is reported, in line with data protection legislation and MOD policy. Once records no longer have an investigative value there is no basis for retaining them, particularly as they contain sensitive personal information. Personal data contained in service records pre-dating 25 May 2018 were protected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Data processed subsequent to this date is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. In 2010 and 2011, in line with Government policy agreed by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Home Office (HO), and Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the MOD enacted policy to destroy legacy police investigative records concerning decriminalised sexual offences so that historical decriminalised convictions would not show up on criminal record checks of Service Personnel. This was lawful, fully in line with appropriate Government policy on data protection, and mirrored Government policy in civilian life.

As part of the IR, the MOD have examined historic records and the policies and decisions made in relation to the retention of those records. We have found that the Single Services correctly followed policies and processes concerning the removal of records, in line with data protection legislation and government policy agreed with the ACPO and led by the HO and the MOJ. As the matter has been subject of an investigation within MOD as part of the IR, and to avoid prejudicing any

recommendations stemming from the ongoing IR, there are no current plans to publish any documentation related to the decision of the Defence Police Chief's Forum in 2010 to implement the government policy at the time

As the records no longer exist, it is not possible to quantify how many records have been destroyed. However, whilst Defence cannot give a precise figure for the number of veterans who had their records destroyed, I can advise that almost all such police investigative records concerning gay and lesbian personnel before 2000 have been destroyed. The question of compensation, admissions of fault, and other such corrective and compensatory measures is a matter for the ongoing IR. Defence will not prejudice the outcome of the IR by speculating on any recommendations it may make. Pensions for Service Personnel are linked to their pay and length of service. Thus, Service Personnel dismissed or discharged in respect of their sexuality retained their accrued pension rights and are, therefore, out of scope of the IR.

The MOD's priority now is to understand the full impact of the historic ban and find appropriate ways to address the wrongs of the past, where possible.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Military Bases**

John Healey:

[\[122434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what British military capabilities have been stationed in the Indian Ocean Territory in every year since 2021.

James Heapey:

The military on Diego Garcia provides the UK and the US with a secure naval base and aerodrome at the centre of the Indian Ocean. The base enables greater reach for ships and aircraft which use it to re-fuel and re-supply and allows military forces to be pre-positioned so they can respond to military or humanitarian crises quickly. For operational and personal security reasons, we cannot disclose the specific military capabilities which are stationed in the British Indian Ocean Territories.

■ **Defence and National Security**

Damien Moore:

[\[125474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support the UK's defence industry and (b) ensure national security in 2023.

Alex Chalk:

The most recent estimate shows Ministry of Defence (MOD) investment supports 219,000 jobs in industries across the UK, including 141,000 direct jobs and 78,000 indirect jobs. Transparency, communication, and a longer-term view of our priorities are fundamental principles of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) which should give industry the confidence to plan ahead and co-invest alongside government accordingly.

Continued high and focussed investment in defence, along with the changes we are making as part of DSIS, means that the MOD is well placed to support the UK's defence industry which underpins our national security.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

John Healey:

[\[128597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement entitled Shipbuilding Update, published on 18 January 2023, HCWS502, whether he has placed any contractual guarantees on the number of jobs that will be created in the UK.

John Healey:

[\[128598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement entitled Shipbuilding Update, published on 18 January 2023, HCWS502, whether he has placed any contractual guarantees on the proportion of the work that will be undertaken in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

As the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship contract, Navantia UK will be held to account to deliver all its contractual obligations.

John Healey:

[\[128599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement entitled Shipbuilding Update, published on 18 January 2023, HCWS502, if he will make an estimate of the number of supply chain jobs that will be created in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 19 December 2022 to Question 108095 to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones).

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Shipbuilding [UIN 108095.docx]

John Healey:

[\[128600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement entitled Shipbuilding Update, published on 18 January 2023, HCWS502, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the build work that will take place in Cadiz.

Alex Chalk:

The three Fleet Solid Support ships will be assembled from 21 blocks. Fourteen of the blocks, comprising the mid and forward sections of all three ships, will be built by Harland & Wolff in the UK. Seven aft blocks of the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ships will be built by Navantia in Cadiz. Following arrival of the aft blocks from Spain, the final outfitting, integration of blocks and modules and fitting of sensitive systems, as well as all testing and commissioning will take place in the UK.

The involvement of a world-class shipbuilder allows for technology and skills transfer into the UK, and UK capability and employment to sustainably step up to deliver the contract.

John Healey: [\[128601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's written statement of 18 January 2022 on Statement made on Shipbuilding Update, if he will place a copy of the contract in the House of Commons Library.

Alex Chalk:

The contract between the Ministry of Defence and Navantia UK is commercially sensitive. I am therefore withholding it as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

■ **Ukraine: Armed Conflict**

John Healey: [\[126541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the importance of the defence space domain in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

James Heapey:

The illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the criticality of space to modern warfare, as well as the value of commercial technologies in supporting military activity.

Ukraine has successfully employed the use of commercial satellite services to access near real-time Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR). As well as acting as a force multiplier for military operations, ISR capabilities have helped to counter the Russian disinformation campaign on the global stage.

Satellite communication has also been critical, with the gifting of Starlink terminals proving to be a lifeline in achieving information advantage, enabling operations and humanitarian support.

■ **Ukraine: Armoured Fighting Vehicles**

John Healey: [\[126538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on the potential merits of hosting Ukrainian personnel to train on the interoperation of Challenger and Bradley vehicles.

James Heapey:

The Defence Secretary regularly speaks with his US counterpart regarding our collective support to Ukraine's armed forces in response to Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion.

This includes plans to provide UK Challenger 2 tanks and US Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles to Ukraine and how we could work together on training Ukraine's Armed Forces on their use. At the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting at Ramstein Air Base on 20 January, over 50 countries and organisations discussed the international coordination of military support, including tanks and armoured vehicles.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Broadcasting Programmes: Crime****Stephen Farry:**[\[128729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the dramatisation of true crime events in television and film on the privacy of victims' families.

Stephen Farry:[\[128730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a requirement for production companies to (a) consult with and (b) gain the consent of a victim's family when dramatising true crime events for television and film.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to a free and independent media and does not intervene in what can and can not be broadcast, or in the regulation of how content is made.

Ofcom is required by legislation, and accountable to Parliament, to independently draw up and enforce a Broadcasting Code for television to ensure that audiences are adequately protected from harm. Within this, there are rules in place on fairness and privacy, which are designed to ensure that broadcasters avoid unfair or unjust treatment of individuals and avoid any unwarranted infringement of privacy in programmes.

Ofcom has responsibility for the Broadcasting Code, including for any amendments, and the Code is kept under continual review. In making any decision, Ofcom has to strike a balance between ensuring freedom of expression and protection from harm.

Under Ofcom's Code, broadcasters should try to reduce the potential distress to victims and/or relatives when making or broadcasting programmes intended to examine past events that involve trauma to individuals, including crime, unless it is warranted to do otherwise. This applies to dramatic reconstructions and factual dramas, as well as factual programmes.

In particular, so far as is reasonably practicable, surviving victims and/or the immediate families of those whose experience is to feature in a programme, should be informed of the plans for the programme and its intended broadcast, even if the events or material to be broadcast have been in the public domain in the past.

■ Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press Inquiry**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[126801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps Department is taking to monitor and ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry.

Julia Lopez:

Since the report of the Leveson Inquiry was published in 2012, we have seen a fundamental reform of the self-regulatory landscape for the press, including the establishment of two new regulators, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and The Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS).

The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of IPSO. The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of IPSO. A small number of publishers have joined IMPRESS, while others, including the Financial Times and the Guardian, have chosen to stay outside either self-regulator with their own detailed self-regulatory arrangements.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992**Chris Stephens:****[R] [128669]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department's compliance with section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Julia Lopez:

The Department shares data and information as set out in section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, as appropriate, with our recognised Trade Unions.

The process for sharing this information is set by our Trade Union Partnership Agreement and upon requests from our trade union representatives. The information is used to support engagement, consultation and negotiation on appropriate areas of policy development and organisational change.

■ Independent Press Standards Organisation**Marsha De Cordova:****[128603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the neutrality of the Independent Press Standards Organisation; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing new neutrality criteria for that regulator.

Julia Lopez:

Since the report of the Leveson Inquiry was published in 2012, we have seen a fundamental reform of the self-regulatory landscape for the press, including the establishment of two new regulators, Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and The Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS). The majority of traditional publishers - including 95% of national newspapers by circulation - are members of IPSO. A small number of publishers have joined IMPRESS.

IPSO has established strong regulatory standards and codes for its members, and offers individuals a means of redress where these standards are not met.

The Government is committed to protecting the freedom of the press and recognises that a vibrant and free press plays an invaluable role in our cultural and democratic life.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Bill Esterson:

[\[127748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to respond to the correspondence of 13 January 2023 from the hon. Member for Sefton Central on an update on the letter from the Minister of 3 November 2021.

Julia Lopez:

I can confirm that we have received the correspondence of 13 January 2023 and will respond within 20 working days, as per the Cabinet Office guidelines.

■ **Open Internet Access (EU Regulation) Regulations 2016**

Stella Creasy:

[\[128637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans she has to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the Open Internet Access (EU Regulation) Regulations 2016.

Paul Scully:

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is part of the government's commitment to taking the necessary steps to update and improve the UK statute book, following our exit from the EU. The Bill will make it easier to amend, repeal or replace REUL, in the best interests of the UK.

The Open Internet Access Regulations, commonly referred to as the 'net neutrality' regulations, were designed to encourage an 'open internet' where end-users, and not Internet Service Providers (ISPs), control what they see and do online.

Assessments of the impact of amending, repealing or replacing areas of Retained EU Law are currently in progress. We are reviewing REUL carefully to ensure that we take the best approach for each item of REUL in time for the sunset date.

■ **Swimming Pools: Energy**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will estimate the number and proportion of swimming pools that have reduced their opening hours in the last six months as a result of rising energy costs; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of reduced opening hours of those pools on public health.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she is taking steps to help ensure that swimming pools remain open to the public.

Stuart Andrew:

We recognise the importance of ensuring public access to swimming pools, as swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy. The responsibility of providing this access lies at Local Authority level, and the Government continues to encourage Local Authorities to support swimming facilities.

We appreciate the impact rising energy prices are having on organisations of all sizes, including on operators of swimming pools. That's why we announced the £18 billion Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) in September last year. The EBRS was always time-limited, and has now been replaced with the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS). Under the EBDS, swimming pools will continue to receive discounts on their gas and electricity bills during the 12-month period from April 2023 to March 2024.

Officials in my department are in regular contact with representatives from the sector to assess the impact of rising energy costs, including monitoring how operators and local authorities are responding to them. I was pleased to host a roundtable earlier this week to hear directly from the sector on how they are adapting to the challenges faced.

Sport England has invested £12,775,274 in swimming and diving projects since April 2019, which includes £9,360,002 to Swim England. This is in addition to the £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund, which supported the reopening of local authority swimming pools throughout the country after the pandemic.

EDUCATION■ **Childcare****Damien Moore:**[\[125481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the childcare offer for working families.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is committed to supporting working families and parents back into employment, by improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare. We have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on early education entitlements, supporting families with the cost of childcare.

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 and encourage providers to take the necessary steps to offer the full range of childcare support to parents using their services. The Childcare Choices website is available at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>. The campaign has driven extensive reach, with adverts being viewed through paid search advertising and digital channels on social media 59 million times. There has also been strong engagement in the campaign,

with 77,995 referrals to GOV.UK pages from the Childcare Choices website during the first burst of the campaign.

We also said that we will 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 can be found online at:

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

We continue to work across government, looking at ways to make childcare more affordable and accessible for working families, and to encourage families to use government-funded support they are entitled to.

■ Children: Social Services

Helen Hayes:

[127852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children's social care departments previously assessed as inadequate and requiring improvement have been reassessed as good and outstanding in each of the last five years.

Claire Coutinho:

As of 20 January 2023, Ofsted have rated 87 local authorities as Good or Outstanding for children's social care, which amounts to 57% of local authorities. This compares to 54 local authorities in March 2017.

A breakdown for the number of children's social care departments previously assessed as Inadequate or Requires Improvement that have subsequently been reassessed as Good or Outstanding in each of the last five years is as follows:

YEAR	NUMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES REASSESSED TO BE GOOD OR OUTSTANDING
2018	11
2019	10
2020	4
2021	3
2022	11
2023 (to date)	2

■ Department for Education: Reviews**Helen Hayes:**[\[126743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date her Department will publish its response to (a) the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and (b) consultations on the SEND Review.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is committed to publishing a full response to both the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper early this year.

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

■ Education: Coastal Areas**Damien Moore:**[\[125485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve educational outcomes in seaside towns.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that education is a key determinant of young people's life chances and social mobility.

The Schools White Paper, published in March 2022, set out a long-term vision for a school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential by ensuring that they receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time, founded on achieving world-class literacy and numeracy. The Department's ambition remains that by 2030, 90% of all primary school children will achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by a third.

The White Paper was clear about the areas the Department needs to drive improvement in to realise this ambition; to ensure an excellent teacher for every child, high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child who needs it, and a stronger and fairer schools system. The Department will build on plans in the White Paper, delivering real progress that raises educational outcomes. This includes working towards all pupils studying mathematics until the age of 18 and supporting schools with a plan to improve attainment in primary schools, as outlined by my right hon, Friend, the Prime Minister.

Significant support is also being provided for 55 Education Investment Areas (EIA), including the Sefton Local Authority. Over the next 3 years, up to £86 million in trust capacity funding and £150 million for extending the Connect the Classroom programme are being prioritised in EIAs. In EIAs, the Department is also offering delivering the Levelling Up premium, worth up to £3,000 tax free, to eligible teachers.

24 of these areas are Priority Education Investment Areas, including the coastal areas of Blackpool, Hastings and Scarborough, where the Department will offer further funding, in addition to the significant support available to all EIAs, to address local needs and drive improvement.

■ Freedom of Expression: Antisemitism

Matt Western:

[\[125446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to require the person appointed as Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom to commit to respecting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of Anti-Semitism.

Matt Western:

[\[125447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of appointing a Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedoms on Anti-Semitism.

Claire Coutinho:

The department has encouraged higher education providers to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and has asked the Office for Students (OfS) to keep a record of those providers which have done so.

The department is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent. We remain committed to the IHRA definition and our belief that providers should adopt it. Students have a right to enjoy their university experience without the fear of antisemitic activity on university grounds and should be protected from harassment and violence.

The Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom will be a member of the board of the OfS, with responsibility for overseeing the free speech functions of the regulator.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will require reasonably practicable steps to be taken to secure freedom of speech within the law. The Director will oversee the free speech functions in that context.

■ Oak National Academy

Andrew Lewer:

[\[125471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons her Department decided to review the impact of Oak National Academy on the educational publishing industry at two year intervals.

Andrew Lewer:

[\[125472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what methodology her Department used to perform the Market Impact Assessment published alongside the Oak National Academy business case in October 2022.

Andrew Lewer:

[125473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will consider lifting the cap on the number of scheme suppliers Oak National Academy will signpost.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will be carrying out a review of the Oak National Academy Arm's Length Body (ALB) in 2024, as part of the wider Public Bodies Reviews programme. Government policy is that a new ALB should be reviewed within 24 months after the start of full operations. The review will act as a checkpoint to ensure that Oak is acting effectively and will include consideration of the effect on the educational publishing industry.

Monitoring market impact is a priority for the Department and will be factored into the ongoing evaluation of Oak National Academy. The Department carried out research and engaged with trade bodies representing relevant commercial suppliers, inviting submissions to inform the market impact assessment. The Department also conducted an informal survey of commercial providers on proposals for what the ALB would do.

Oak will work collaboratively to develop new content and will signpost users to a small number of other high quality curriculum sequences in each subject. The purpose of signposting is to demonstrate that there is more than a single approach to curriculum sequencing and to direct teachers to where they can find out more information regarding alternative curricula. Oak is not intended as a marketplace and its purpose is not to show teachers all available options. Teachers will still be free to use materials that are not signposted on the Oak website.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[126752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of mental health support available within schools.

Claire Coutinho:

Schools are best placed to decide themselves what support to offer to their pupils to support their mental health and wellbeing. The department does not collect detailed data on provision in schools, but does ask questions about schools' perceptions of mental health support as part of our regular omnibus surveys, the results of which are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-panel-omnibus-surveys-for-2021-to-2022>.

To help schools to make informed decisions on what support to provide, the department is funding all schools and colleges in England to train senior mental health leads who can put in place whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. This includes how to make sure they are including processes for identifying students, or specific groups, who need additional mental health support. Two thirds of schools and colleges will have been able to access funding by April 2023, backed by a £10 million investment for the 2022/23 financial year.

There are also currently 287 mental health support teams in place in around 4,700 schools and colleges across the country, offering support to children experiencing common mental health issues and facilitating smoother access to external specialist support such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. These teams now cover 26% of pupils a year earlier than originally planned, and this will increase to 399 teams, covering around 35% of pupils by April 2023, with over 500 planned to be up and running by 2024. Further information is available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/>.

■ Schools: Playing Fields

Matt Western:

[124040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the contribution of playing fields to the health and fitness of school pupils; and whether she plans to introduce minimum size requirements for school playing fields.

Nick Gibb:

The provision of school playing fields for sport, as well as for informal and social use, is widely accepted to contribute to the health and fitness of school pupils. This is why playing fields are protected under Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Similarly, under the School Premises Regulations and Independent School Standards, all schools must have suitable outdoor space to enable physical education and for pupils to play outside.

The Department's guidance documents, Building Bulletins 103 and 104, provide non-statutory guidelines for the minimum recommended size of playing fields for any school. The minimum size of the playing field depends on the size and age range of the school.

■ Teachers: Trade Unions

Charlotte Nichols:

[125508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had since her appointment with (a) the NEU and (b) other teaching unions about pay and working conditions.

Nick Gibb:

Since her appointment, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has met with the National Education Union (NEU) and other unions and representative bodies to discuss a wide range of school and college policy issues, including pay and working conditions. The Department appreciates the work of the teaching profession to build a world class education system, and the Secretary of State will continue to engage in constructive dialogue on a broad range of issues.

Since 25 October, the Secretary of State for Education has met with unions and other representative bodies on 27 October, 1 November, 15 December, 13 and 18 January. Other Ministers from the Department have also met with unions on 9, 14, 15, 16 and 29 November.

■ Teachers: Training**Richard Graham:****[125323]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teacher training places (a) in total and (b) for science subjects were available in Gloucestershire in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2022; and what proportion of places (A) in total and (B) for science were taken up.

Nick Gibb:

The table attached shows the new entrants to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in the Local Authority of Gloucestershire for the academic years 2019/20 to 2022/23, split by postgraduate and undergraduate trainees. The table includes the number of trainees for all ITT courses and for trainees on science courses.

Local Authority data is determined by the location of the institution, which is not necessarily where the trainee is located. The figures are based on data from the latest ITT census publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census>.

The 2022/23 data is provisional and will be revised as part of the 2023/24 publication. The Department does not hold complete data on the number of teacher training places available. As such, it is not possible to provide any information on the proportion of places taken up.

Attachments:

1. Gloucestershire ITT new entrants [125323 table.pdf]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Subsidies****Robert Courts:****[125437]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many farm businesses have accessed at least one of the schemes available under the Agricultural Transition Plan in the financial year (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

Mark Spencer:

Outside the bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy, we are freeing farmers to enhance the natural environment alongside food production, supporting our drive to reach net-zero by 2050. We will deliver this by pressing ahead with our Environmental Land Management schemes and phase out direct payments.

As we set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan, we are providing a package of ongoing funding and one-off grants to support farmers with environmental actions, food production and productivity. We've already opened two new environmental land management schemes – the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Landscape Recovery - and already have thousands of farmers applying. That's alongside Countryside Stewardship, which continues to offer payment for environmental actions, and will be enhanced to deliver our high environmental ambition. In parallel

to the schemes, we have launched a number of grants for one-off funding to support productivity, such as money for new equipment and technology, slurry storage and water management. We urge all farmers to look at our schemes and grants and to decide what works for their farm business.

In 2021/22 there were at least 39,000 instances of businesses accessing at least one of the schemes available under the Agricultural Transition Plan. And so far in 2022/23, the number of businesses is at least 48,000 businesses. Of these 32,000 businesses (2021/22), and 36,000 businesses (2022/23) accessed at least one of the environmental land management schemes available under the Agricultural Transition Plan.

■ Animal Experiments

Julian Sturdy:

[\[117573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help encourage companies to transition away from testing products on animals.

Rebecca Pow:

There has been significant progress in moving away from using animals to assess chemicals hazards, although there are some hazards where there is no immediate prospect of developing a non-animal alternative that could be used as the standard test method across the full range of chemicals. The UK contributes internationally to the development of non-animal alternatives for chemical testing through collaborative research programmes and work at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which develops internationally standardised tools and guidance to support companies and regulators in the use of non-animal methods. Defra also co-chairs a cross-Whitehall working group focused on the integration of non-animal methods into chemicals and wider risk assessment where they are equal to or offer improvements to accuracy, speed and efficiency. Our approach to regulation aligns with this direction of travel; REACH contains the last resort principle, which means that an animal study can only be carried out once a company has exhausted other ways of assessing the chemical's hazard.

■ Animal Products: Imports

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[120844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what her Department's policy is on the importing of (a) fur and fur products, (b) foie gras and (c) hunting trophies; and if she will make a statement.

Mark Spencer:

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare outlined our intention to explore potential action on the import of animal fur. We have since conducted a Call for Evidence on the fur sector along with other forms of engagement with interested parties. We are continuing to build our evidence base on the fur sector.

The production of foie gras by force feeding is banned in the UK as it is incompatible with our domestic legislation. We are committed to building a clear evidence base to inform any potential future decisions relating to imports.

HM Government has pledged to ban the imports of hunting trophies from thousands of species. We are committed to a ban that is among the strongest in the world and leads the way in protecting endangered animals. We are supporting the Private Member's Bill led by the hon. Member for Crawley that will deliver this.

■ Avian Influenza: Disease Control

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[117498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support farmers with bird flu outbreaks.

Mark Spencer:

To help producers deal with the impacts of the UK's worst ever avian influenza outbreak on 28 October 2022, Defra announced a new package of measures to support domestic producers with the impacts of avian influenza. This included changes to the compensation scheme allowing compensation to be paid to farmers from the outset of planned culling rather than at the end. This will give earlier certainty about entitlement to compensation, better reflect the impact of outbreaks on premises and lead to swifter payments to help stem any cash flow pressures. Compensation is paid for birds culled by HM Government for avian influenza disease control purposes is designed to promote prompt reporting of suspicion of disease and is only payable for healthy birds as set out in the Animal Health Act 1981.

In addition, in consultation with the Food Standards Agency, Defra announced a relaxation to marketing rules to give farmers who rear turkeys and other seasonal poultry products the option to slaughter birds early, to freeze them and then sell them to consumers defrosted between the period 28 November and 31 December 2022. The Welsh Government announced a similar concession on 3 November as did the Scottish Government via legislation on 28 November. This was introduced to help businesses get their birds off the ground early to avoid losing flocks to avian influenza, and to help them plan ahead for Christmas and ensure the supply of turkeys.

Defra will continue to review policy options to support the poultry sector.

■ Avian Influenza: Research

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[109546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to take steps to increase the resources of the Animal and Plant Health Agency to (a) identify outbreaks of and (b) undertake virus survivability research on avian influenza.

Mark Spencer:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) leads the Government's action on animal disease control and during any significant avian influenza outbreak, APHA's

resource capacity and capability are kept under close review. APHA have outbreak response and contingency plans in place, these include measures to contract companies to support eradication and cover such matters as the deployment of non-Government vets and experts in culling and disposal of birds. APHA also works closely with other agencies from within the Defra group to provide additional capacity.

Alongside the Government's continued investment in the Avian Influenza National Reference Laboratory and APHA's Weybridge site, earlier this year an eight-strong consortium 'FluMap' led by APHA and funded by Defra and the Biotechnology and Biosciences Research Council was launched that received £1.5 million in funding to develop new strategies to tackle avian influenza outbreaks.

This year long research project will help build our understanding in a number of key areas, including why the current virus strains have formed larger and longer outbreaks, transmission and infection in different bird populations, the ability for the virus to survive in the environment and the impact environmental persistence may have on transmission to both wild and/or kept birds. The Government is committed to the strongest possible standards of protection against animal diseases. Defra continues to invest in avian influenza research, and we continue to monitor the current situation both in Europe and globally, as well as the effectiveness of any disease control measures taken.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[108427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the paper published in The Veterinary Record in March 2022 entitled analysis of the impact of badger culling on bovine tuberculosis in cattle in the high-risk area of England, 2009–2020, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of that paper's findings; and if she will make it her policy to prevent industry-led badger culling.

Mark Spencer:

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Christine Middlemiss, and Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Gideon Henderson, have made clear their views on the paper referenced in their letter to the Veterinary Record of 18 March and in the correction published on 21 May, which had no impact on their original conclusions.

■ **Business: Recycling**

Jane Hunt:

[\[125512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that businesses separate recyclable waste from general waste.

Rebecca Pow:

We want to increase the recycling of packaging material, food and other recyclable material in the 'non-household' municipal sector, which includes businesses, public organisations (e.g. schools, universities, hospitals and government buildings) and

other organisations. This will help us to increase the amount of material that we recycle and reduce the amount of waste that we send to landfill.

Following support in response to initial consultation, the Environment Act 2021 stipulates that all businesses will be required to arrange for the collection of a core set of materials (glass; paper and card; plastic; metal; and food waste) for recycling in England

In 2021 we published a second consultation on recycling consistency. This consultation sought views on increasing consistency in recycling, including on the materials in scope of collection; exemptions; statutory guidance for waste collectors and cost reduction options for micro firms.

We are finalising our policy positions and analysis for impact assessment – we aim to publish the consultation response soon.

■ **Cats and Dogs: Tagging**

Giles Watling: [\[103027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to set up a national database for microchip companies to input data received for dogs and cats.

Giles Watling: [\[103028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to set up a national database for dog and cat microchips.

Rebecca Pow:

We are not proposing to create a single cat and dog microchip database. Database operators are commercial enterprises which offer a range of services and provide choice for pet owners.

A consultation seeking views on changes to the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 closed on 20th May 2022 and we are analysing the responses. The consultation sought views on creating a single point of access facility for approved users to quickly search compliant databases for a microchip record. We intend for this to also apply to cat microchip records.

This is a devolved matter and these developments relate to the situation applying in England.

■ **Cats: Tagging**

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[113280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce compulsory microchipping for cats.

Rebecca Pow:

We plan to lay regulations soon, which will bring compulsory cat microchipping into force in England. Once in force, cat keepers will have 12 months to comply with the new requirements.

Sarah Champion:[\[117598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to bring compulsory microchipping of pet cats into force.

Rebecca Pow:

We plan to lay regulations soon which will bring compulsory cat microchipping into force in England. One in force, cat keepers will have 12 months to comply with the new requirements.

Dr Lisa Cameron:[\[119217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage local authorities to (a) collect and scan cats injured or killed in road traffic accidents for a microchip and (b) inform the owners of those animals or their injuries or deaths.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government has committed to introducing compulsory cat microchipping and this will increase the likelihood that cats injured or killed on roads can be reunited with their keeper. It is established good practice for local authorities to scan any cat or dog found on the streets so that the owner can be informed. Cats Protection reports that 80% of councils in England routinely scan cats involved in accidents. Additionally, Highways England has clear guidelines for contractors to follow when they find a deceased cat or dog.

■ Compost**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[125495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the minimum acceptable distance between housing and open windrow composting sites.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency's standard rules permit for composting does not allow operations within 250m of housing. Operations may be allowed closer to sensitive receptors, provided that a site-specific assessment has been made, that aerosol release is controlled, and that monitoring is in place to confirm the efficacy of such controls. Such an operation would require a bespoke permit. Decisions about location of new housing are made under the separate local authority-led planning system.

■ Dangerous Dogs**Daisy Cooper:****[125498]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the debate on Breed-specific Legislation, Official Report, column 242WH, when the responsible dog ownership project will conclude its work.

Rebecca Pow:

We expect the Responsible Dog Ownership working group to conclude its work and provide recommendations to Ministers later this year.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Accountancy**John Cryer:****[102750]**

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

Mark Spencer:

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

Details of Core Defra contracts (which include its agencies) from 2010 to 2016 awarded to Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers can be found in the attached spreadsheet.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: EU Law**Stella Creasy:****[82271]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will set out the process by which his Department is (a) identifying and (b) reviewing retained EU law which may be in scope of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

Mark Spencer:

The UK's REUL, set out on the Retained EU law dashboard, has been collected as part of a cross-government collaborative exercise. It provides an iterative record, which will be updated at regular intervals, of where REUL sits across over 300 policy areas and 21 sectors of the economy.

Defra is undertaking a department-wide programme to coordinate analysis of its REUL stock and determining what should be preserved as part of domestic law, as well as REUL that should be repealed, or amended.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Mark Pawsey:

[\[125327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as part of her Department's work to design and implement a Deposit Return Scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, whether it has made an assessment of the potential merits of using (a) radio frequency identification tagging and (b) barcodes to support the introduction of a Digital Deposit Return Scheme.

Rebecca Pow:

Whilst some parts of industry are exploring the potential of a Digital DRS, a scalable technical solution does not currently exist for this type of model, and will not for a number of years. Therefore, we are currently delivering a Deposit Return Scheme that follows the 'return to retail' model as used internationally in other DRS's. We do recognise the benefits of a digital model and remain encouraged and interested in seeing the continued testing of the feasibility for introducing a digital scheme in the future. Should other opportunities for innovation emerge, we believe that the scheme will be able to evolve and adapt in line with the lifespan of the original infrastructure.

■ Diseases of Swine Regulations 2014

Stella Creasy:

[\[128636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans she has to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the Diseases of Swine Regulations 2014.

Mark Spencer:

In reviewing REUL, Defra is committed to ensuring our laws deliver improved outcomes and the highest standards in a way that is tailored to the needs of UK consumers and business. The UK has world leading standards backed by a rigorous legislative framework and it is only right that we should evaluate REUL to ensure it continues to meet our needs. 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, if appropriate, in relation to the Diseases of Swine Regulations 2014 (2014:1894).

■ Dogs: Animal Breeding

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[121038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has commissioned research on the number of unregulated canine fertility clinics in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has not commissioned research into the number of unregulated canine fertility clinics.

■ Flood Control: Expenditure

Tim Farron: [\[123902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the £5.2 billion investment for flood defence measures announced in 2020 has been spent so far; and which projects have been supported by that funding.

Rebecca Pow:

Between April 2021 and March 2022 Government invested £742 million of capital funding in Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM).

The Environment Agency expects to have spent approximately £1.5 billion, or just under 30% of the £5.2 billion allocation, by the end of March 2023. A list of capital schemes protecting properties, completed between April 2021 and March 2022 is available from data.gov.uk.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Tim Farron: [\[123903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of inflation on the adequacy of the £5.2 billion funding announced in 2020 for flood defence measures.

Tim Farron: [\[123906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the reduction in her Department's real terms budget for flood defences on the adequacy of those defences.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is currently investing a record £5.2 billion on building new and improving existing flood defences, double the value of the previous programme. Higher than expected inflation is causing challenges to the delivery of all infrastructure programmes. Defra and the Environment Agency are currently undertaking an assessment of the potential impact of inflation. By spring 2023 we expect around 60,000 properties will have already been better protected by this programme.

■ Flood Control: Local Government

Rachael Maskell: [\[127808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to ensure that local authorities have access to relevant (a) information and (b) expertise to assist with natural flood management strategies.

Rebecca Pow:

One of the 5 policy areas in the [Government policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion](#) is 'Harnessing the power of nature to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and achieve multiple benefits'.

The Environment Agency (EA)'s Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) [Roadmap to 2026](#) includes ambitions to work with partners to mainstream Natural Flood Management (NFM) across England.

The EA will publish an update to the [Working with Natural Processes Evidence Directory](#) later this year. It will continue to gather data and evidence from Natural Flood Management Projects to inform learning and best practice .

Alongside these actions to support partners, the EA has published an evaluation of the [Natural Flood Management Programme](#) which benefited from £15 million of Government funding. Local authorities were one of a number of partner organisations involved in the pilot schemes.

The EA will support all bodies with flood and coastal erosion risk management responsibilities, including local authorities, with access to training and development to deliver more natural flood management.

■ Food: Packaging

Mark Pawsey:

[\[120899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of using flexible semiconductors in food waste packaging.

Rebecca Pow:

We welcome industry initiatives to help reduce waste through packaging solutions although there is no specific work in this area.

■ Food: Waste

Peter Gibson:

[\[124094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of supermarket brand protections on the redistribution of surplus food; and what discussions she has had with the representatives of the supermarket sector on eliminating food waste.

Peter Gibson:

[\[124095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of brand protections on food waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is investing £2.6m this year to combat food waste through funding the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). This includes engagement across the supply chain, including supermarkets, through the Courtauld 2030 Commitment. Courtauld 2030 is a voluntary agreement and includes a target of a 50% per capita food waste reduction by 2030 against a 2007 baseline. Courtauld signatories take action to prevent food waste in their own operations as well as magnifying campaign messages to help citizens waste less such as those developed for Food Waste Action Week.

We continue to support WRAP's work with the redistribution sector, which includes the provision of best practice guidance and knowledge sharing across the sector. The Courtauld Redistribution Working Group identified retailer brand labels as a priority barrier to redistribution, and in 2021 WRAP published new 'Best practice on redistributing own label products in the supply chain'. The guide identifies how a more consistent approach can be taken to the redistribution of surplus retailer own-label food. This will result in more food being made available for redistribution in a timely manner, while making sure brand integrity and product safety are protected. [Surplus Food Redistribution Resource Hub | WRAP](#).

■ Highly Protected Marine Areas

Henry Smith:

[\[122118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will set out a strategy for 10 per cent of English waters to be classed as Highly Protected Marine Areas by 2026.

Trudy Harrison:

We are not currently considering a numerical target for HPMA's in English waters. We recently consulted on five candidate pilot HPMA's and our current focus is designating sites using the views and evidence gathered during the consultation. Any pilot HPMA's 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.

■ Lake Windermere: Sewage

Tim Farron:

[\[125309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has plans to work with United Utilities to ensure that (a) treated and (b) untreated sewage is not discharged into Windermere lake.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra engages regularly with water company representatives at both an official and ministerial level, including United Utilities (UU), to protect our waterbodies from sewage discharges.

The Government expects all water companies to deliver the targets set out in the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan as fast as possible and by the target end dates at the latest.

In the Windermere catchment, the Environment Agency (EA) continues to hold United UU to account for its operations. Where the EA has issued environmental permits, it has robustly checked compliance and all assets were inspected between 2020 and 2023. Where breaches of permit conditions are identified, the EA used its powers to ensure that UU improved operations and brought sites back into compliance. The EA holds regular production meetings with UU to discuss and resolve compliance issues.

This year, the EA will begin reviewing larger volume environmental permits on the catchment – including those of UU. If current permit conditions are no longer effective at protecting the environment, the EA will impose tighter environmental standards. The EA delivers a strategic environmental monitoring programme and with environmental data collected by the Citizen Science Big Windermere Survey and other partners it is better able to understand where UU assets may be impacting on the environment. Where improvements are required, the EA will work with UU to include the improvement schemes in future Asset Management Programmes.

■ Lighting: Pollution Control

Tim Farron:

[119007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dark Skies entitled Ten Dark Sky policies for the Government, published on 9 December 2020, if he will take steps to implement the policies in that report.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises that light pollution may have an impact on people, affecting their health and wellbeing, as well as the environment. We have put in place a range of measures to ensure that light pollution is managed effectively. These include controls in the planning system, the statutory nuisance regime, and improvements in street lighting.

Defra has worked with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that planning decisions should limit the impact of light pollution on local amenity, dark landscapes and nature conservation. The statutory nuisance regime requires that local authorities have a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to investigate complaints of artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to human health or a nuisance.

The management of street lighting in England is the responsibility of local highway authorities. Local highway authorities have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the public highways in their charge, including street lighting. Central Government has no powers to override local decisions in these matters or intervene in these kinds of local issues.

The Department for Transport recognises that light pollution (and excessive or wasteful use of lighting) can pose some social, economic and environmental problems. We also encourage local authorities to consider best practice when making decisions about lighting on their networks. Advice is available from the UK Lighting Board: <https://ukrlg.ciht.org.uk/media/12302/well-lit-highways-24-may-2013-clean.pdf>.

Our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have some of the best dark skies, and attained some of the earliest official Dark Skies designations, in Europe. Seven of our parks have secured protected dark sky status, and we are committed to conserving and celebrating this wonderful experience for all.

The Government considers the existing measures are sufficient to manage the problems caused by artificial light and there are no current plans to revise them. Defra also continues to review emerging evidence on the impacts of light pollution on biodiversity.

■ Livestock

Tim Farron: [\[126579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to increase or reduce livestock numbers in the next ten years.

Mark Spencer:

UK livestock numbers are determined by our individual farmers and reflect the domestic and global demand for our high quality, high welfare meat and dairy. Our livestock farmers are world leading and we recognise the contribution they make to feeding the nation, and that well managed livestock provide benefits such as supporting biodiversity, protecting the character of the countryside and generating important income for rural communities.

■ Livestock: Antibiotics

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[99924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of prohibiting (a) preventative antibiotic group treatments on farm animals and (b) antibiotics being used to compensate for poor hygiene or inadequate husbandry on farms.

Kate Osamor: [\[99925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits for tackling superbugs of (a) prohibiting all forms of routine farm antibiotic use and (b) prohibiting purely preventative antibiotic group treatments.

Mark Spencer:

Defra does not support the routine or predictable use of antibiotics, including where antibiotics are used to compensate for inadequate farming practices. We have been consistent that the focus of tackling antimicrobial resistance must be on reducing all unnecessary use of antibiotics, because resistance is promoted whenever an antibiotic is used, regardless of the reason.

■ Plastics: Packaging

Fleur Anderson: [\[122273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the results of the consultation on commonly littered single use plastic items will be published.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government response to the consultation was published on the 14 January 2022.

Following overwhelming support from respondents, from October 2023 we will introduce legislation banning the supply to the end user of single use plastic plates, trays, bowls, except when used as packaging, and banning the supply of single-use plastic cutlery and balloon sticks, and certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers, in England.

■ River Thames: Sewage**Munira Wilson:**[\[122505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implication for his policies of Thames Water's proposal to convey millions of litres of treated wastewater into the River Thames at Teddington Weir, including (a) potential health implications, (b) impact on biodiversity and (c) safeguards to protect water quality.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency (EA) has reviewed work undertaken by Thames Water to understand the risks and mitigation required for a Teddington Direct River Abstraction (DRA) scheme through the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) gated process to ensure it meets stringent environmental standards. The EA is currently reviewing any proposals for new water resources options through the statutory Water Resources Management Plan consultation and more detailed assessment of Teddington DRA through the RAPID gated process.

■ Sewers: Waste Disposal**Alan Brown:**[\[104257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December to Question 97784, on Sewers: Waste Disposal, if she will take steps to require developers to pay for sewer upgrades to offset any potential impact of developments on (a) water quality and (b) flood risk.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government already has a process in place to ensure developers offset their impact on water quality in sites protected under the Habitats Regulations 2017. Through a Habitats Regulations Assessment, developers must mitigate the impact of all plans and projects that have the potential to adversely impact such sites due to nutrient pollution. This includes impacts on water quality.

In addition, the review for making sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) mandatory in new developments in England was published on 10 January 2023. The Government has accepted the review's recommendations and will now look at how best to implement. Fewer new connections to sewers through introducing more SuDS will

reduce the pressures on the sewers, reducing surface water and sewer flood risk, discharges from storm overflows and pollution.

■ Total Allowable Catches

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[92172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Department disagreed with advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas on Total Allowable Catch in its fishing negotiations with the EU, Norway and the North-East Atlantic coastal states.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 16 January 2023 to PQ 108161.

■ Trapping

Alex Norris: [\[102931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 29 September to Question 45245 on Trapping, when he plans to launch the call for evidence.

Trudy Harrison:

If improperly used snares can cause immense suffering to both target and non-target animals. Used properly, some stakeholders consider them to be a valuable tool in the protection of rare and endangered species.

We are looking at how snares are regulated as part of our continued drive to maintain the highest animal welfare standards in the world, and working to ensure the regulated use of the most appropriate trap and cull method which causes the least suffering whilst providing the greatest protection to crops, game birds or endangered species.

Through our Animal Action for Welfare Plan, published in May 2021, we are looking at whether changes need to be made to reflect concerns raised. Defra ministers are meeting with key external stakeholders and, once engagements are completed, we will be able to update on a timeframe for a call for evidence.

■ Water: Nitrates

Christopher Pincher: [\[120958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she will take to ensure water companies provide adequate plant and technology to abstract polluting nitrates from watercourses.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is taking action to ensure that the water industry tackles nitrogen pollution.

A large programme of monitoring has been undertaken to establish whether elevated nitrogen is giving rise to eutrophication in estuaries and coastal waters that exceed

their numerical nitrogen standards. Where this is the case, water companies have been required to put in place more stringent nutrient removal treatment at wastewater treatment works. This can see the level of nitrate in wastewater effluent reduced by 70-80%.

This investment forms part of the total £2.5 billion that water companies are investing in measures to reduce nutrient pollution (nitrogen and phosphorus) from 2020 to 2025.

Beyond this, the Government has introduced new provisions to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that will place a new statutory duty on water and sewerage companies in England to upgrade wastewater treatment works to the highest technically achievable limits by 2030 in areas currently under nutrient neutrality advice. This will see further investment at wastewater treatment works discharging to areas of the country particularly impacted by nitrogen and phosphorus pollution.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Abdalle Ahmed Mumin**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 December 2022 to Question 111562 on Somalia: Journalism, if he will hold discussions with his Somalian counterpart on the case of the Secretary General of the Somali Journalists Syndicate, Ahmed Mumin.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We have raised the case of Secretary General of the Somali Journalists Syndicate Abdalle Mumin with the Somali authorities in Mogadishu. This case, as with all harassment or arrests targeting journalists in Somalia, is troubling given the fundamental importance of freedom of expression in underpinning all human rights. The UK will continue to advocate for the right of journalists to do their jobs without fear or intimidation.

■ **Alaa Abdel Fattah**

Matt Western:

[\[124042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Egyptian counterpart on the detention of British citizen Alaa Abd El-Fattah since 21 November 2022.

David Rutley:

The UK Government makes regular representations about Mr Alaa Abd El-Fattah's imprisonment, welfare and lack of consular access and will continue to do so until his case is resolved. The Foreign Secretary and his Ministerial team have raised Mr El-Fattah's case on a number of occasions. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, most recently raised Mr El-Fattah's case with

the Egyptian Ambassador on 5 December. The British Embassy Cairo also raise his case regularly with the Egyptian authorities.

■ Asia-Pacific Region: Foreign Relations

Catherine West: [\[117752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK-based staff in his Department have been solely focused on relations with Asia Pacific nations in each year since 2010.

David Rutley:

Data on the detail of individual staff roles and responsibilities is not held centrally.

The publication of the Integrated Review in March 2021 affirmed the UK's increased focus and long-term commitment to the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific tilt is a whole of UK Government effort with staff focused on delivering UK objectives across the region, including to strengthen defence, security and trade partnerships, and to uphold and promote the international rules based system.

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

In addition, the UK continues to increase focus on the region. We have doubled the number of British High Commissions across the Pacific Island Countries over the past three years. The UK now has six High Commissions in the Pacific including: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

The UK also opened the UK Mission to ASEAN in 2019 to strengthen UK-ASEAN engagement. Since achieving ASEAN Dialogue Partner Status, the UK Mission to ASEAN has expanded with further roles planned by March 2023. We have also increased resourcing in a number of key Missions including Canberra, Jakarta, and Singapore. Recruitment is underway for new roles across trade, economics, cyber, media/communications, science and technology.

■ Bolivia: Demonstrations

Fabian Hamilton: [\[127703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of protests in Bolivia which began in December 2022.

David Rutley:

Protests began in Bolivia in December following the arrest of the governor of the region of Santa Cruz, Fernando Camacho. We have updated travel advice for British travellers in the region. As part of a regular dialogue with the Bolivian government, we

have conversations in relation to security, justice and human rights, among other issues. We will continue to monitor this trend and engage where appropriate.

■ **Brazil: Politics and Government**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[126550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of reports that President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has dismissed 40 members of the Brazilian Armed Forces in the administration and security of the Alvorada Palace presidential residence following the insurrection that took place in January 2023.

David Rutley:

It is for the Brazilian Government to decide what measures they consider appropriate to ensure the security of official buildings in Brasilia. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and our Ambassador to Brazil have recently reconfirmed the UK's full support for President Lula and the Government of Brazil and the importance of respecting the democratic will of the Brazilian people. The UK has a deep and longstanding relationship with Brazil based on shared commitments to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We look forward to working with President Lula and his government to further strengthen our relationship with Brazil.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[124175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the value of the British Indian Ocean Territory as a strategic and geopolitical asset to the UK.

David Rutley:

The joint UK/US base on Diego Garcia has contributed significantly to regional and global security. The base helps the UK, US and other allies and partners to combat some of the most challenging threats, including from terrorism, organised crime and instability.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[124172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Mauritian counterpart on the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

David Rutley:

The Foreign Secretary and his Mauritian counterpart have not yet met to discuss the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago. The former Foreign Secretary met the Mauritian Foreign Minister at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in June 2022.

Alexander Stafford: [\[124173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date discussions between the UK and Mauritius on the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory began.

David Rutley:

On 3 November 2022, the Foreign Secretary made a Written Ministerial Statement, stating that the United Kingdom and Mauritius had decided to begin negotiations on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago.

Alexander Stafford: [\[124174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to consult the (a) Chagos Islanders and (b) their descendants on the sovereignty of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

David Rutley:

We recognise the diversity of views among Chagossian communities in the UK, Mauritius and Seychelles about the future of British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)/Chagos Archipelago. We take these views very seriously. While the negotiations are between the UK and Mauritius, we will ensure that we engage with Chagossian groups as the negotiations progress. An engagement event for Chagossian community groups to share their views will take place in February.

■ Central African Republic: Arms Trade

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[125301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of recent cross-border activity by the armed forces of Sudan on the UN arms embargo in Central African Republic and on security in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are monitoring reports of recent cross-border activity by Sudanese armed groups in the Central African Republic (CAR). The deterioration of peace and security in CAR continues to take a severe toll on the population, compounding an already acute humanitarian situation. The potential involvement of such regional armed groups in CAR would risk undermining recent political and humanitarian progress. It is vital that the UN Sanctions Regime (including an arms embargo) continues to support the CAR authorities in maintaining peace and stability in the country. The UK therefore welcomed the UN Security Council's agreement to maintain the existing targeted sanctions and the renewal of the Panel of Experts mandate in July 2022.

■ Colombia: Homicide

Dan Carden:

[\[125462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will discuss with his Colombian counterpart reports of the murder of Ricardo Osorio in Colombia.

David Rutley:

Colombia is a UK Human Rights Priority Country and UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues with the Colombian Government. At the UN Security Council on 11 January, I [Minister Rutley] raised attacks on human rights defenders and social activists and our commitment to supporting efforts to address the root causes of violence in Colombia. To date, we have spent over £74 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia and improve stability and security. We will continue to support programmes that help Human Rights Defenders and other groups affected by violence.

■ Developing Countries: Elections

Julian Sturdy:

[\[125333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support international partners facing instability following democratic elections.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Promoting democracy and defending democratic freedoms are fundamental to the UK's international policy. Our Arm's Length Body, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), provides electoral integrity support to countries around the world. WFD has led post-electoral reform work in Somaliland and Zambia and continues to develop practical electoral reform tools for partners to enhance electoral integrity. In Fragile and Conflict Affected States the UK's work targets the drivers of crises. Political transitions can be destabilising and, based on detailed analysis, where risks are high we draw on cross government capabilities to help reduce tension.

■ Developing Countries: Females

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[125438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department plans to publish International Women and Girls Strategy.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO will publish a new International Women and Girls Strategy in the coming months. This will build on the International Development Strategy and outline how the FCDO will use the full range of levers at its disposal (including foreign, development, and security) to deliver on the 3Es (Educating girls, Empowering and Championing the health and rights of women and girls, and Ending violence against women and girls).

This is especially urgent work in the context of global challenges and the attempted rollback on women's and girls' rights by some actors.

■ **Fariba Kamalabadi and Mahvash Sabet**

Ruth Jones: [\[125492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received recent reports on the status of (a) Fariba Kamalabadi and (b) Mahvash Sabet since their re-imprisonment in December 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Ruth Jones: [\[125493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if will have discussions with the UK Embassy in Iran on the health of (a) Fariba Kamalabadi and (b) Mahvash Sabet; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The UK has condemned the sentencing of Baha'i leaders Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi to a further decade in prison. As I have made clear, Iran's persecution of religious minorities is a serious violation of international human rights law and cannot be tolerated in 2023. On 26 October, the Government reiterated its commitment to holding Iran to account for its treatment of the Baha'i at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Third Committee. We continue to work with our international partners to ensure that the Iranian regime is held to account for its appalling human rights violations.

■ **Food Supply**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[128691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the UK's Global Food Security Action plan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In response to the deteriorating food security and malnutrition situation in East Africa and beyond, the UK is working with partners to accelerate efforts to transform agriculture and food systems to be more productive, sustainable and resilient.

The UK's Global Food Security Action plan supports and is aligned with published strategies including the International Development Strategy and the UK Humanitarian Framework. It is an internal FCDO document to direct and prioritise Officials' work on food security. However, we remain committed to scrutiny and have provided a confidential copy to the International Development Select Committee.

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

Emily Thornberry:

[\[118872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list was for the events for which At Home Catering was paid (i) £2,848.20 on 5 May 2021, (ii) £2,408.04 on 4 November 2021, (iii) £12,687.96 from 18-29 March 2022, (iv) £4,422.24 on 26 July 2022 and (v) £8,138.32 from 11-25 October 2022.

David Rutley:

These relate to a range of events held at 10 Downing Street, 1 Carlton Gardens, Lancaster House and Admiralty House, including events hosted by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary for international delegations. The exchange of hospitality has long been an important part of building relations and diplomacy.

The payment dates refer to the dates the caterers were paid, and are not the dates events took place on.

All events took place in-line with HMT guidelines and fully complied with any COVID regulations and social distancing guidance that may have been in place at the time. Expenditure was subject to normal FCDO controls and an appropriate use of public money.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[118874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card in January 2021, what items were purchased from Anthropologie on 1 and 4 January 2021; and for what purpose those items were purchased by his Department.

David Rutley:

These relate to furniture purchases for the unfurnished residence of a staff member in a newly created diplomatic role in our Consulate in Houston. Expenditure was subject to normal FCDO controls and an appropriate use of public money.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[122082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of government procurement card spending over £500 for March 2021, what services were purchased from Paul Martin on 8 March 2021; and for what purpose were they required.

David Rutley:

This was for the Master of Ceremonies for the Department for International Trade annual Trade and Investment Awards ceremony in Spain. The award show promoted commercial relationships between the UK and Spain, promoted UK exports to Spanish audiences and showcased the UK as an investment destination. Attendees

included Spanish business leaders, the former Investment Minister Lord Grimstone and the Spanish Minister for Trade, Xiana Méndez. Expenditure was subject to normal controls.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[123890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's publication of government procurement card spending over £500 for June 2022, what the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list was for the event for which Seasoned Events Catering were paid £5,401.20 between 10 and 14 June 2022.

David Rutley:

This relates to venue and catering costs for an Indian trade mission to the UK during London Tech Week 2022. This was organised by the Department of International Trade to boost engagement between UK start-ups and top India tech companies who were in attendance. Expenditure was subject to normal controls.

■ **Ghana: Cholera**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[125440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to help tackle cholera in Ghana.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

At present, Ghana has no cholera cases. Its disease surveillance system remains active, and the UK is supporting its strengthening and expansion. Since 2020, the UK has funded training for over 10,500 health workers in Ghana. This is on health surveillance and outbreak response, including within cholera prone regions of Ghana. The UK continues to support Ghana's Ministry of Health to build a resilient health system able to respond promptly and effectively to outbreaks, through a Department of Health and Social Care programme to strengthen workforce capacity.

■ **Horn of Africa: Development Aid**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on (a) Somalia and (b) Ethiopia of changes to UK aid allocations between 2019-20 and 2021-22.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Throughout changes to UK aid allocations in these years, the UK has and will continue to be a champion for international development and one of the most generous global aid donors, spending more than £11 billion in 2021.

This applies in Somalia where we are a leading donor. Over 2018-22 our flagship humanitarian and resilience programme reached almost 9.5 million Somalis, including more than 2.5 million with emergency food assistance and over 3.8 million with agricultural development activities.

It also applies in Ethiopia, where last financial year alone UK funding treated more than 330,000 malnourished children, gave almost 500,000 people access to safe water, reached more than 1.7 million people with emergency medical supplies, and provided more than 1.4 million with cash assistance to buy food and other essentials.

We remain committed to protecting the most vulnerable and to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on Official Development Assistance as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

■ Human Rights

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[125441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his planned timetable is for the publication of a strategy on open societies.

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, putting human rights, open societies, democracy and the international rule of law at the centre of our foreign policy.

■ India: Trade Agreements

Carol Monaghan:

[\[121042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of the (a) proposed demolition of property in Haldwani and (b) other potential human rights abuses on the progress of trade discussions with her Indian counterpart.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The British High Commission in New Delhi continues to monitor the situation in Haldwani, while recognising that this is a matter for India.

We will not pursue trade to the exclusion of human rights. We regard both as an important part of a mature and wide-ranging relationship with our international trading partners. We engage India on a range of human rights matters and, where we have issues, we raise them directly with the Government of India, including at Ministerial level.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Ruth Jones:

[\[124080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of Iran's nuclear capabilities; and what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on those capabilities.

David Rutley:

Iran's nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today. Iran's nuclear escalation is threatening international peace and security and undermining the global non-proliferation system.

We remain determined that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon. Iran's actions over the past months have made progress towards a diplomatic solution much more difficult. We are considering next steps, in discussion with our European and international partners.

■ **Iran: Sanctions****Mark Pritchard:**[\[125293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to extend sanctions against Iranian government (a) officials and (b) agencies.

David Rutley:

The UK has designated over 300 Iranian individuals and entities in relation to their roles in human rights violations, weapons proliferation, destabilising activity in the region and terrorism. On 23 January we announced sanctions on the deputy Prosecutor General and six other individuals and entities responsible for the regime's violent crackdown on protestors; this brings to 50 the number of new designations since October 2022 under the UK's Iran Human Rights regime. It is longstanding practice not to speculate on future sanctions designations, but 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.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Beth Winter:**[\[124136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Government of Israel on the withholding from the Palestinian Authority of approximately \$150million in tax revenue, collected on its behalf.

David Rutley:

The UK regularly engages the Government of Israel on deductions from the clearance revenue transfer to the Palestinian Authority and related losses. The UK chairs a working group covering this issue at the regular Ad Hoc Liaison Committee attended by both parties. Addressing losses and deductions from the transfer of Palestinian Authority tax revenues is critical to managing the current fiscal crisis.

■ Israeli Settlements

Beth Winter:

[\[124135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to his Israeli counterpart on the Government of Israel's proposals to advance and develop settlement in the West Bank.

David Rutley:

We are clear that settlements are illegal under international law and threaten the viability of a two-state solution. The UK urges the Government of Israel to permanently end its settlement expansion and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli outposts in the West Bank are also illegal under international and Israeli law, and should be removed entirely. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January.

■ Juan Guaidó

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[120147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department recognises Juan Guaidó as the interim President of Venezuela as of 10 January 2023.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[120153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department received legal advice on its recognition of Juan Guaido as interim President of Venezuela.

David Rutley:

On 30 December 2022 the 2015 National Assembly of Venezuela democratically voted to disband the interim Government and the position of constitutional interim President held by Juan Guaidó, with effect from 5 January 2023. On 12 January, I [Minister Rutley] published a Written Ministerial Statement, noting that the United Kingdom respects the result of this vote. We commend former interim President Guaidó for his service to the Venezuelan people. We continue to consider the National Assembly elected in 2015 as the last democratically elected National Assembly in Venezuela. We continue not to accept the legitimacy of the administration put in place by Nicolas Maduro since 2019. We do not comment on when legal advice has been received.

■ Kenya: Malnutrition

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of malnourished people (a) in total and (b) at risk of preventable death due to hunger in Kenya.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

According to most recent analysis, across Kenya 4.4 million people currently face 'crisis' or worse food security outcomes. Malnutrition levels are also deteriorating with 884,464 children under 5 years of age facing acute malnutrition and in need of treatment. In addition, 115,725 pregnant or lactating women are acutely malnourished and in need of treatment.

■ Myanmar: Diplomatic Service**Tracey Crouch:**[\[125313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with the Myanmar Government on attempts to evict the ex-Myanmar Ambassador to the UK and his family from their residence in London.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We have been clear that Kyaw Zwar Minn showed great bravery in speaking out against the coup and he has paid a personal cost in doing so. The UK remains steadfast in our opposition to the coup and continues to call for a return to democracy, including through the UK-led UN Security Council on 21 December 2022. Since his dismissal as Ambassador by the regime in April 2021, the FCDO has provided Kyaw Zwar Minn with significant support to help him build a new life in the UK, if he desires.

It is the longstanding policy and practice of successive British Governments to accord recognition to States, not Governments. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations places the UK under a special duty as the receiving State to protect the premises of the mission and prevent any impairment of its dignity. The FCDO has held discussions at official level with Kyaw Zwar Minn and, separately, with the representatives of the Myanmar Embassy in order to resolve this matter in a mutually acceptable way.

■ Nigeria: Development Aid**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[126562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to (a) reduce Official Development Assistance to Nigeria and (b) allocate more funding outside the North-East of Nigeria.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO is committed to transparency with the public and predictability with our partners. We will update on planned Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for this Spending Review period in due course. The UK Government focuses its aid investment and expertise on the highest priority needs where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum impact.

■ Northern Ireland Protocol

Jim Shannon:

[\[126644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to ensure to timely passage of the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill.

Leo Docherty:

Our preference has always been for a negotiated outcome, but if that isn't possible, we have introduced the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill to fix the practical problems created by the Protocol. We have always said we won't expedite the bill and parliamentary business will be announced in the usual way.

■ Russia: Ukraine

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will have discussions with Cabinet colleagues on taking steps to mark the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the UK's support for the Ukrainian diaspora in this country.

Leo Docherty:

A year on from Russia's invasion, Ukraine has demonstrated its resilience and determination, in the face of an aggressor who has sought to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity, unleashing immeasurable pain and suffering on the Ukrainian people. It is right that we mark this day, including with our Ukrainian friends and recognising the support of people across the UK.

■ Sahel: Malnutrition

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) adults and (b) children at risk of preventable malnutrition-linked death in the Sahel.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In 2023, over 25,000 people in the Sahel are expected to face famine conditions, and close to 1 million people are expected to face emergency levels of food insecurity which is one step away from famine. In 2022 it was estimated that over 1.2 million children in the Sahel suffered from severe acute malnutrition, the most dangerous form of malnutrition. Similar levels are expected in 2023. The UK is a committed donor to the Sahel; in the past year alone, we provided over £300 million in total to the region. I will attend the Africa Food Summit in Dakar this week [25-27 January].

■ Ukraine: Repatriation**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[126848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason his Department (a) funded the repatriation of five Britons from Ukraine on 22 September and (b) did not fund the repatriation of the body of Paul Urey.

Leo Docherty:

The FCDO cannot pay for repatriation following the death of a British national overseas. We aim to provide the best support we can to bereaved families who have lost loved ones overseas. Consular staff are available 24/7 to help families understand local processes and options, including for repatriation and emergency financial assistance. Our thoughts remain with Paul Urey's family.

For data protection reasons I cannot share information about individuals without their permission.

■ West Bank: Palestinians**Beth Winter:**[\[124137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart to oppose the expulsion of Palestinians from the Masafer Yatta area of the West Bank.

David Rutley:

The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January.

Matt Western:[\[125448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the destruction of Palestinian villages located within Masafer Yatta in the West Bank.

David Rutley:

The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January.

■ Zimbabwe: Elections

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[125304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of (a) the arrest, detention and alleged torture of opposition activists on 14 January 2023 and (b) other recent developments in Zimbabwe on (i) rights of expression, assembly and association and (ii) the freedom, fairness, peacefulness and credibility of the forthcoming elections in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is aware of the arrest of 25 opposition members on the 14 January. All incidents of violence should be investigated in full.

We continue to monitor the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. As the British Ambassador to Zimbabwe publicly stated on 2 October 2022, the UK is committed to the fundamental rights to peaceful assembly, association and due process enshrined in Zimbabwe's constitution.

It is for the people of Zimbabwe to choose their government through peaceful, credible and inclusive elections. We encourage the Government of Zimbabwe to implement the recommendations of the 2018 Electoral Observation Missions and to allow space for political opposition and civil society organisations to operate freely ahead of elections in 2023.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[128595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendation 13 in the Chief Medical Officer's 2022 annual report on air quality, what steps he has taken with Cabinet colleagues to clarify the ownership of indoor air quality policy.

Neil O'Brien:

There have been no discussions about changes to Departmental responsibility in this area. There is no single Departmental policy lead for indoor air quality. There is ongoing collaborative work across Government on both outdoor and indoor air quality.

■ Ambulance Services: Mental Health Services

Dean Russell:

[\[130117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing NHS mental health ambulances.

Maria Caulfield:

On 23 January, the Government announced that, as part of the £150 million capital investment in National Health Service mental health urgent and emergency care, £7 million of the investment has been allocated to procure centrally up to 100 specially designed mental health ambulances over the next two years. The mental health ambulances, designed by patients and clinical experts, will be staffed by both physical and mental health professionals. They will be equipped to respond to and assess people on-scene or take people to the most appropriate place for care, both improving patient experience and reducing the number of people who are taken to accident and emergency by ambulance services.

■ Autism: Diagnosis**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[113157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the average time children under 11 wait for a completed assessment with the Autism Assessment Service (a) nationally and (b) in Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 9 January 2023]: There are no current plans to make a specific assessment.

However, the Mental Health Services Data Set (MHSDS) shows that in the year from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 in England, the median waiting time for patients aged under 11 years old, with an open referral for suspected autism to receive a first contact appointment was 251 days. We are unable to provide the average waiting time for Gloucestershire in this period as there were less than five open referrals.

NHS England South West is working closely with regional integrated care boards (ICBs) and NHS England National team to improve the data collection of autism diagnosis waits. In addition, NHS England South West continues to work with regional ICBs to support the improvement of autism diagnosis and waiting times for children, young people and adults supported with a regional investment of £1.68 million over three years.

■ Bipolar Disorder: Diagnosis**Jim Shannon:**[\[129787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help reduce waiting times for the diagnosis of bipolar disorder in people under the age of 21.

Maria Caulfield:

We remain committed to investing in expanding and transforming National Health Service mental health services in England by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 as set out in the NHS Long Term Plan. This will allow an additional two million people, including 345,000 children and young people, to get the mental health

support they need, such as a diagnosis for bipolar disorder. We aim to increase the mental health workforce by an additional 27,000 healthcare professionals by 2023/24 to support this expansion and transformation of services.

NHS England has consulted on the potential to introduce five new mental health-related waiting time standards as part of its clinically-led review of NHS access standards. As a first step, NHS England has shared and promoted guidance with its local system partners to consistently report waiting times to support the development of a baseline position.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

Feryal Clark:

[\[126862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to meet the Government's objective of ensuring that the number of people waiting more than 62 days to start treatment following suspected cancer will return to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023.

Helen Whately:

The Department is taking steps with NHS England to support local systems to address the waiting list for cancer services. November 2022 saw the highest number of urgent general practitioner referrals for cancer with nearly 265,000 patients referred compared to the pandemic low of 80,000 in April 2020.

Cancer treatment is also at record levels. The National Health Service has treated a record number of people for cancer in the last year with over 321,000 people receiving their first cancer treatment over the last year, between December 2021 to November 2022.

To support elective recovery the government plans to spend more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25. NHS England has also developed an intervention model through which challenged trusts are receiving additional national and or regional support to maximise and expand their cancer diagnostic and treatment capacity.

■ Carers

Damian Green:

[\[126507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to expand support for family carers including increasing the options available for respite breaks.

Helen Whately:

Funding for respite and short breaks for carers is included in the National Health Service contribution to the Better Care Fund (BCF). In 2022/23, £291.7 million of BCF funding has been earmarked to provide short breaks and respite services for carers, as well as advice and support to carers.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Caroline Lucas:

[\[127730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with public health stakeholders on ventilation in publicly provided spaces to reduce transmission of covid-19; what assessment he has made of the risks for people who are immunocompromised of covid-19 transmission in publicly provided spaces that operate without ventilation; if he will take steps to provide the funding and logistical support necessary to ensure the safe ventilation of publicly provided spaces; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

Representatives of NHS Test and Trace held a workshop on examining environmental innovations on 29 January 2021 where several technologies were presented by experts to an evaluation panel of public health stakeholders. UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has ongoing discussions with a range of public health stakeholders on ventilation and other ways to ensure clean air in publicly provided spaces with regard to reducing transmission of COVID-19 and other airborne diseases.

Throughout the pandemic, Government advice and information has been informed by the best scientific evidence available from health agencies, academics, and experts as detailed in Living with COVID-19 guidance. People who are immunocompromised should follow Government advice from the Department and UKHSA for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk from COVID-19. This suggests continuing to wear a face covering in public spaces, practicing social distancing and reducing the amount of time spent in enclosed areas.

To address the risk of COVID-19 in public spaces, the Government has run public communications campaigns and published comprehensive business guidance on ventilation and fresh air. Government funding has also supported ventilation mitigations in education settings and enabled local authorities to use their allocations from the £60 million Adult Social Care Omicron Support Fund, to audit and improve fresh air in adult social care.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Martyn Day:

[\[117707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage covid-19 vaccine take-up in patients with severe mental illness.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government continues to work with the National Health Service and UK Health Security Agency to provide information to explain the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination and has launched a nationwide communications campaign to encourage eligible members of the public to protect themselves by getting their COVID-19 boosters. To raise awareness of the risks of being unvaccinated and to make vaccination as convenient as possible, guidance is being given to general

practitioners, primary care networks and vaccination services to prioritise individuals coming forward for vaccination.

Resources are also being shared by Charity Partners to ensure greater reach to individuals with Severe Mental Illness (SMI) as well as invites sent to those with SMI and their carers to further encourage them to come forward for vaccination. We are also providing reasonable adjustments for individuals, where identified or requested, including quiet spaces and additional resources.

There is a collaborative approach to analyse and understand the vaccine uptake data for those with SMI through engagement with national and regional mental health leads, health inequalities leads and data analysts. To understand what works and develop good practice, the COVID-19 vaccination deployment programme works closely with NHS SMI programme leads in addition to engaging closely with SMI charities.

Daisy Cooper:

[127903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure that kidney patients (a) are supported to take up covid-19 vaccinations and (b) receive information on the potential declining protection from previous doses of vaccines.

Maria Caulfield:

While the effectiveness rates of COVID-19 vaccines are very good, people who are on immunosuppression medications for the treatment of advanced kidney disease and kidney transplant recipients, may not receive the same level of protection, also known as antibody immunity, from the COVID-19 vaccine as people who are not on immunosuppressive medication.

While more research is needed to learn more about the effectiveness in people with advanced chronic kidney disease (CKD), those on dialysis, and transplant recipients, COVID-19 vaccines have been demonstrated to be safe in this population.

In line with The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advice, COVID-19 vaccination is offered to those aged 16 years old and over with CKD and those aged five years old and 15 years old with chronic conditions of the kidney. Individuals who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression are also eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. More information regarding clinical risk groups and eligibility is set out in the COVID-19 Green Book chapter 14a.

We are continuing to support all eligible groups to take up COVID-19 vaccination and to provide information regarding the benefits of vaccination, its effectiveness, and the risks of not coming forward. Anyone eligible for either a flu or COVID-19 vaccine, is encouraged to take up the vaccine as soon as possible to give themselves the best possible protection this winter.

■ Dental Services

Chi Onwurah: [\[127762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to prevent dental practices from requiring the registration of family members as private patients before registering other family members as NHS patients.

Neil O'Brien:

Practices are not permitted to require registration of family members as private patients to receive National Health Service care. This is set out both in the General Dental Council's Standards for the Dental Team, and in the NHS Dental Services contracts regulations.

■ Dentistry: Migrant Workers

James Wild: [\[127912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many overseas dentists are waiting to take the Overseas Registration Examination.

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 the latest data on the number of overseas qualified dentists waiting to take the Overseas Registration Exam. This data is held by the GDC.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: South Tyneside

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[127777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money South Tyneside Council has returned to his Department from grants allocated in the last two years as of 19 January 2023.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: The Department's finance and accounts data systems show that a total of £71,205.51 has been returned by South Tyneside Council to the Department in respect of grant payments allocated by the Department to the Council in the last two years.

■ Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry

Priti Patel: [\[122453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the level of evidence provided by current and former staff to the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020.

Priti Patel: [\[122454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help encourage current and former staff to provide evidence to the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020.

Priti Patel: [\[122455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether the terms of reference for the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020 can be met with the inquiry's status as a non-statutory inquiry.

Neil O'Brien:

This is an independent inquiry, which is ongoing. No assessment has been made of the level of evidence provided by current or former staff. The Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust has assured the Department of the trust's support for the inquiry and the trust CEO will provide confirmation to Ministers of additional steps to support greater staff participation in the Inquiry.

The Department is also working closely with the inquiry, the trust and NHS England to look at what more can be done to encourage staff to engage with the Inquiry. Ministers will continue to give careful consideration to the progress of the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry, and whether or not it should remain on a non-statutory footing.

■ Food: Advertising

Stephen Kinnock: [\[127778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the Government made the decision to postpone the implementation of the TV and online unhealthy food advertising restrictions to October 2025; and whether new evidence was used to make that decision.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[128647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason he has delayed the introduction of a watershed of 9pm for television advertisements for food high in fat, salt and sugar.

Neil O'Brien:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds North West Arfon on 10 January 2023 to Question [114808](#).

Stephen Kinnock: [\[127779\]](#)

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

Neil O'Brien:

A full impact assessment for the policy was published in June 2021 providing detail on the expected impact of the restrictions. We do not expect a short-term delay to the implementation to have a significant impact on the substantial benefits in the longer term.

General Practitioners: Barking and Dagenham**Dame Margaret Hodge:**[\[126512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding the NHS allocated to (a) Barking Group Practice, (b) Salisbury Avenue Healthcare, (c) Porters Avenue Surgery and Child and Family Surgery, (d) Tulasi Medical Centre, (e) The Longbridge Practice, (f) Church Elm Lane Medical Practice, (g) Parkview Medical Centre, (h) Broad Street Medical Centre, (i) Heathway Medical Centre, (j) Dr M Fateh's Surgery, (k) The Oval Practice, (l) Dewey Practice, (m) Halbutt Street Surgery, (n) Drs K Alkaisy & F Islam Associates, (o) Laburnum Health Centre, (p) Green Lane Surgery, (q) Becontree Medical Centre and (r) Valence Medical Centre in the (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20, (iii) 2020-21 and (iv) 2021-22 financial year.

Neil O'Brien:

A table showing the funding allocated to the general practice (GP) surgeries requested is attached, and is derived from the NHS Digital publication, 'NHS Payments to General Practice'. This constitutes the majority of actual monies paid to the named GPs for all activities and costs during the financial years listed.

Practices may also receive payments via other funding streams which are currently not captured within the 'NHS Payments to General Practice' data publication. Some of these funding streams are from other organisations such as Local Authority Public Health Bodies, monies owed but not paid to individual practices, income from private services (including travel jobs and certificates) and local authorities investment from centrally led or procured elements of transformational investments, and investments by trusts in GP services in accident and emergency departments.

Attachments:

1. General practices NHS funding [PQ126512 - Annex A - GP NHS funding.docx]

Health Services**Andrew Selous:**[\[122077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are patient representatives on the boards of integrated care boards and on primary care, commissioning and assurance committees; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 January 2023]: The Health and Care Act 2022 sets out minimum membership requirements for integrated care boards (ICBs) that includes representatives from NHS Trusts, Primary Care and Local Authorities and does not mandate patient representation on ICBs. However, the local areas can, by local

agreement, go beyond the legislative minimum requirements in order to address their local needs.

Primary care, commissioning and assurance committees are non-statutory ICB committees. There are no national requirements set by NHS England for how ICBs constitute any committee responsible for the discharge of any delegated primary care responsibilities including patient representation.

ICBs' constitutions are expected to include principles and arrangements for how the ICB will work with patients and communities. ICBs are also legally bound (under section 13Q of the National Health Service Act 2006) to involve the public in the commissioning of services for National Health Service patients.

Currently there are no plans for the Secretary of State to make a statement to mandate any additional requirements for ICBs.

■ Health: Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of people being admitted to hospital because of the effect of their housing conditions on their (a) medical wellbeing and (b) appetite; and what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to reduce this level.

Neil O'Brien:

The information requested is not collected centrally. The Government recognises that poor housing conditions, including cold homes, can have an adverse impact on the health of vulnerable population groups. The Government is 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.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Mr Peter Bone:

[\[127721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many medically fit patients in acute wards are awaiting discharge in (a) Kettering and (b) Northampton General Hospital; and what proportion of the total available beds this constitutes in both locations.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: In the week ending 15 January, the daily average number of patients who remain in hospital and do not meet the criteria to reside in Kettering General Hospital Trust was 54, 9% of available beds, and in Northampton General Hospital Trust was 114, 17% of available beds.

Mr Peter Bone:

[\[127722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many medically fit patients in NHS acute wards are awaiting discharge; and what proportion of the total available beds this constitutes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: In the week ending 15 January, there was a daily average of 14,000 patients in hospital who were medically fit to be discharged. This accounts for 14% of the total beds available from the trusts who submitted discharge data.

■ **Hyperthermia: Children**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) babies and (b) children have been admitted to hospital with hyperthermia in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table shows the hospital admission for hyperthermia for children aged between 0 and 17. The data from April 2022 to November 2022 is provisional.

YEAR	MONTH	AGED BETWEEN ONE YEARS OLD AND 17	
		UNDER ONE YEARS OLD	YEARS OLD
2021	December	21	-
2022	January	29	-
2022	February	32	1
2022	March	22	-
2022	April	23	1
2022	May	30	-
2022	June	25	2
2022	July	28	1
2022	August	28	-
2022	September	28	-
2022	October	26	-
2022	November	20	-

■ Hysteroscopy: Pain

Rachael Maskell:

[\[126715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that women undergoing hysteroscopy tests opting for a general anaesthetic do not experience delay to their procedure.

Maria Caulfield:

To transform the way the National Health Service provides care, reduce delays and tackle waiting times including for gynaecology services, the Department has allocated £2.3 billion to open up to 160 Community Diagnostic Centres by 2024/25 and £1.5 billion for new surgical hubs. Surgical hubs focus on providing high volume low complexity surgeries including in gynaecology, as recommended by the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Operative Hysteroscopy under general or regional anaesthesia is one of the procedures surgical hubs are able to provide within gynaecology. Currently, there are 89 elective surgical hubs that are operational across England, helping tackle waiting times and improving patient outcomes.

■ Integrated Care Boards

Martyn Day:

[\[127832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of including (a) primary care optometrists and (b) other primary care clinicians on integrated care boards alongside primary medical clinicians such as GPs.

Neil O'Brien:

The Health and Care Act 2022 sets a minimum membership requirement for integrated care boards that includes representatives from National Health Service trusts, Primary Care and Local Authorities. However, the local areas can, by local agreement, go beyond the legislative minimum requirements in order to address their local needs.

■ Liver Diseases: Death

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[126688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle rising liver disease deaths in deprived coastal areas.

Neil O'Brien:

We are taking steps to identify those who are drinking at a level that places them at risk of alcohol-related liver disease, to increase the earlier detection of liver disease in those at risk. During NHS Health Checks information on alcohol consumption and body mass index is used to support people to make healthier choices which can help to prevent liver disease.

Additional treatment and recovery funding, made available through the new drug strategy, can be used to increase capacity for screening for liver fibrosis in treatment settings and to establish effective referral pathways with hepatology. This includes a number of deprived coastal areas that were allocated the extra funding in the first phase of a three-year investment programme as areas of highest need.

In the National Health Service the earlier detection of alcohol-related liver disease in secondary care settings is currently being incentivised through a Commissioning for Quality and Innovation indicator applicable to acute and mental health trusts across England. In addition, the National Cancer Programme is working to detect more hepatocellular carcinomas at an early stage as part of the NHS Long Term Plan ambition to diagnose 75% cancers at an early stage by 2028.

■ Malnutrition: Older People

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many elderly people have been admitted to hospital with malnutrition in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table shows a count of finished hospital admissions for primary and primary or secondary diagnosis of 'malnutrition' for patients aged 65 years old and over in England in each month between December 2021 to November 2022.

YEAR	MONTH	PRIMARY DIAGNOSIS	PRIMARY OR SECONDARY DIAGNOSIS
2021	December	32	483
2022	January	25	432
2022	February	29	432
2022	March	27	424
2022	April	17	393
2022	May	21	431
2022	June	29	420
2022	July	39	486
2022	August	34	487
2022	September	20	422
2022	October	18	421
2022	November	8	189

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), NHS Digital

Notes

1. A finished admission episode (FAE) is the first period of admitted patient care under one consultant within one healthcare provider. FAEs are counted against the year or month in which the admission episode finishes. Admissions do not represent the number of patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the period.
2. The primary diagnosis is the first of up to 20 diagnosis fields in the Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data set and provides the main reason why the patient was admitted to hospital.
3. The number of episodes where this diagnosis was recorded in any of the 20 primary and secondary diagnosis fields in a Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) record. Each episode is only counted once, even if the diagnosis is recorded in more than one diagnosis field of the record.

■ **Materials and Articles in Contact with Food (England) Regulations 2012**

Stella Creasy:

[\[127755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether they plan to (a) revoke (b) retain or (c) replace the Materials and Articles in Contact with Food (England) Regulations 2012.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December 2022 to Question 102910.

■ **Medicine: Students**

Simon Lightwood:

[\[128739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) review NHS hospital car parking charges for medical students and (b) provide funding for medical students in financial need.

Will Quince:

Currently the Government has no plans to review National Health Service hospital car parking charges for medical students. NHS trusts determine car parking charges locally. All trusts that charge for car parking have implemented free hospital car parking for those with the greatest need. This includes NHS staff working overnight, which extends to students employed by the trust. The Government reviews funding arrangements for all healthcare students before the start of each academic year.

Whilst we will attempt to address a variety of issues with the finite resources available to us, we must also strike a balance between ensuring students are financially supported during their studies and delivering maximum value for money for the taxpayer.

■ NHS 111: Dental Services

Helen Hayes: [\[127854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many calls NHS 111 received on emergency dental care in (a) London and (b) England each year since 2015.

Helen Hayes: [\[127855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have attended A&E departments for emergency dental care in (a) London and (b) England each year since 2015.

Neil O'Brien:

The information is not held in the format requested. The following table shows the number of NHS 111 calls per year advised to contact dental services in London and England since records began in July 2017.

YEAR	ENGLAND	LONDON
2017 (from July)	363,665	34,378
2018	724,220	73,257
2019	625,533	83,461
2020	858,966	120,720
2021	951,180	144,873
2022 (to November)	793,029	127,119

The number of people attending A&E for emergency dental care is not collected centrally.

■ Ophthalmic Services

Martyn Day: [\[127836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure all NHS commissioners offer primary care optometrists the opportunity to provide Minor Eye Conditions Services to all communities across England.

Martyn Day: [\[127837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adding Minor Eye Care Services to the General Ophthalmic Services contract to ease the pressures on (a) GPs and (b) A&E waiting times.

Neil O'Brien:

In England, integrated care boards are responsible for the planning and commissioning of services to meet local needs. This includes decisions on whether to

commission locally enhanced services, such as minor eye conditions services, from primary eye care providers. NHS England's transformation programme is also considering what eye care services can be safely moved out of hospital and into the community to ease ophthalmology pressures.

■ Ovarian Cancer: Diagnosis

Alex Norris:

[\[121138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve early diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Helen Whately:

One of the core ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan is to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage 1 or 2 by 2028, which would be an increase from the current rate of around 55%.

The National Health Service is implementing non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways for patients who do not fit clearly into a single 'urgent cancer' referral pathway but who are at risk of being diagnosed with cancer. 99 NSS pathways are currently operational across England, with more in development.

NHS England is running the 'Help Us, Help You' campaigns, which seek to address the barriers that are deterring patients from accessing the NHS. A campaign on abdominal and urological symptoms launched on 31 October 2022 and ran through to December 2022, directly addressing symptoms of ovarian cancer.

■ Pharmacy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[125406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help support community pharmacies with increased (a) running and (b) pharmaceutical costs.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework: 2019 to 2024 commits £2.592 billion each year to the sector. In September 2022, we announced a one-off £100 million investment into pharmacy for the remainder of the five year deal. The agreement also includes new and expanded services in community pharmacy.

When market prices go up and pharmacies cannot purchase products at or below the Drug Tariff NHS reimbursement price, the Pharmaceutical Service Negotiating Committee can request the Department to reconsider the reimbursement price and set a concessionary price. Concessionary prices are established using real time data from suppliers to generate prices that are reflective of the overall market.

Paul Holmes:

[\[903232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help prevent the closure of pharmacies.

Neil O'Brien:

Pharmacies provide vital and easily accessible healthcare in the heart of our communities. The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-24 five-year deal commits £2.592 billion annually to community pharmacy and in September we announced a further one-off investment in the sector of £100 million.

Access remains good with 80% of the population living within 20 minutes walking from a pharmacy and the Pharmacy Access Scheme financially supports pharmacies in areas where there are fewer pharmacies.

■ Primary Health Care**Martyn Day:**[\[127833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the wider use of other NHS Primary Care providers to ease the pressures on General Practice.

Neil O'Brien:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) 2019-24 five-year deal sets out the vision for how community pharmacy will support the NHS Long Term Plan by being better integrated into the National Health Service, delivering more clinical services, and becoming the first port of call for minor illness. All community pharmacies provide health advice including support for self-care and healthy living advice. NHS 111 phone and online as well as general practitioner practices can refer patients with a minor illness to a community pharmacy and this will be expanded to urgent and emergency care setting in March. Most pharmacies now also carry out blood pressure checks. From Autumn, pharmacies will also be able to supply oral contraception without a visit to general practice.

In addition, NHS England's 2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance published in December 2022 asks systems to expand direct access and self-referrals to community health services to empower patients to take control of their healthcare.

Martyn Day:[\[127834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to move towards patient self-referral as the default pathway for (a) community audiology and (b) other routine community NHS services.

Neil O'Brien:

There are currently differing approaches to patient self-referral to audiology services across the country. The NHS England '2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance' was published in December 2022. This set out a key action for systems to expand direct access and self-referral for a range of services where general practitioner involvement is not clinically necessary. By September 2023, systems are asked to put in place self-referral routes to audiology-including hearing aid provision as well as falls response services, musculo-skeletal physiotherapy services, weight management services, community podiatry, and wheelchair and community equipment services. Systems are also expected to put in place direct referral

pathways from community optometrists to ophthalmology services for all urgent and elective eye consultations by September 2023.

Martyn Day:

[127835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of patient self-referral into routine NHS community services to reduce GP backlogs in England.

Neil O'Brien:

Direct access and self-referrals allow patients to take control of their healthcare, streamlines access to services and reduces unnecessary burden on general practitioner (GP) appointments. The NHS England '2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance' was published in December 2022. This set out a key action for systems to expand direct access and self-referral for a range of services where GP involvement is not clinically necessary. By September 2023, systems are asked to put in place self-referral routes to audiology-including hearing aid provision as well as falls response services, musculo-skeletal physiotherapy services, weight management services, community podiatry, and wheelchair and community equipment services. Systems are also expected to put in place direct referral pathways from community optometrists to ophthalmology services for all urgent and elective eye consultations by September 2023.

■ Primary Health Care: General Practitioners

Dr Luke Evans:

[R] [903237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the contribution of GPs to the delivery of primary care.

Neil O'Brien:

We are hugely grateful to GPs and their teams for the role they play in delivery services to their communities. In November 2022, there were 31.3 million general practice appointments, excluding Covid-19 vaccinations, 14.4 million of which were delivered by general practitioners.

General practice teams include a range of other health professionals who are able to respond to the needs of their patients, and we are on track to recruit an additional 26,000 primary care staff.

■ Public Health: Finance

Andrew Gwynne:

[125282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with local government on the public health grant allocations for (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: The Department has frequent contacts with representatives of local Government on a range of public health issues. I met the

Local Government Association on 17 January recently to discuss a number of matters relating to the public's health, including future public health grant allocations.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[125283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the public health grant in (a) 2023-24 and (b) 2024-25 will increase in line with inflation as announced in the Spending Review 2021.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: We will announce the 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[125285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to inform local authorities of their provisional public health grant budgets for 2023-24.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: We will announce the 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly.

■ **Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Children**

Rachael Maskell: [\[127816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) babies and (b) children have been admitted to hospital with RSV/bronchiolitis in each of the last 12 months for which data is available.

Neil O'Brien:

This information is not held in the format requested. NHS Digital advise that since December 2021 there was a finished admission episode (FAE) count of 38,705 babies aged 0 who had a primary diagnosis of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) or bronchiolitis, and similarly a count of 7,382 for children aged one years old to 17 years old.

For the same period there was a FAE count of 43,391 babies aged 0 with a secondary diagnosis of RSV or bronchiolitis, and a count of 11,503 for children aged one years old to 17 years old.

■ **Social Services: Innovation**

Damian Green: [\[126508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what Government support has been made available to encourage the implementation of innovative forms of care and support in the social care sector.

Helen Whately:

The 'People at the Heart of Care' white paper published in December 2021 recognised the transformative role technology and new innovations can play in improving the quality and safety of care. As part of this, we committed to achieving

80% adoption of digital social care records by March 2024 and have launched a scheme to scale care technology where there is proven benefit and build the case for further change and innovation across the sector by testing new ideas. To support these ambitions, we have made £25 million available to integrated care systems.

■ **Social Services: Staff**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[128718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a 10-year workforce plan for the social care sector.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made. We have set out our long-term vision for the social care workforce in the 'People at the Heart of Care' white paper, including how Government will invest to support learning and development alongside new frameworks to increase opportunities for career progression and development. In spring 2023, the Government will publish a plan for adult social care system reform which will set out how we will build on the progress so far to implement the vision in the white paper.

■ **Suicide: Veterans**

Nick Fletcher:

[\[128725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help reduce the suicide rate of male veterans under 25.

Maria Caulfield:

All veterans can access bespoke National Health Service mental health support through Op COURAGE, which provides a complete mental health care pathway for veterans, who can benefit from personalised care plans, support and treatment both in and out of hours. Op COURAGE includes the High Intensity Service, which is for veterans in crisis about mental health, including at risk of suicide. We strongly encourage all veterans who need mental health support to contact Op COURAGE.

Veterans who may not wish to access Op COURAGE can also access the full suite of NHS support available to the public, including via the 24 hours seven days a week single point of access telephone lines for urgent NHS mental health support, which are in place in every area of the country. Alongside this, veterans can also access third sector support via many helplines, including the Samaritans and other suicide prevention helplines.

Additionally, every local authority has a suicide prevention plan in place, tailored to meet the needs of their local communities. The Government is also investing an additional £57 million in suicide prevention by 2023/24 through the NHS Long Term Plan to support local suicide prevention plans and the development of suicide bereavement services, which will enable more people to access the support they need, including veterans and their families. On 24 January 2023, we announced that we will be publishing a new National Suicide Prevention Strategy this year.

■ Tobacco**Bob Blackman:** [\[125325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities spent on tobacco control policy and implementation in 2021-22; and how much is budgeted to be spent by that office for that purpose in 2022-23.

Neil O'Brien:

In the 2021/22 financial year, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities spent £901,873 on tobacco control policy and implementation and the 2022/23 budget is up to £1,182,000.

HOME OFFICE**■ Anti-corruption Champion****Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[126744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to recruit an Anti-Corruption Champion.

Tom Tugendhat:

An announcement on a new champion will be made in due course.

■ Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**Andrew Lewer:** [\[125470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has published guidance on the compatibility of section 59 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 with the Equality Act 2010.

Chris Philp:

We provided the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the '2014 Act').

The statutory guidance makes clear on page 26 that any use of the powers in the 2014 Act must be compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The statutory guidance, under the s.59 Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) chapter, also mentions that the Equality Act 2010 is complied with when proposing PSPOs with dog walking restrictions that would affect those who rely on assistance dogs.

No separate guidance has been published on the compatibility of section 59 of the 2014 Act with the Equality Act 2010.

■ Asylum: Accommodation Centres**Damien Moore:** [\[128708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether local authorities can refuse a new asylum accommodation site in their area.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office, and wider government, continue to work closely with Local Authorities to discuss proposed accommodation sites in their area.

We recognise the vital role Local Authorities play in this work which is why we have regular engagement with them, seeking their views and addressing issues they face.

■ Asylum: Applications**Jim Shannon:**[\[126646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to resolve the backlog in processing asylum applications; and whether her Department has plans to hire more staff to process applications.

Robert Jenrick:

We are taking action to rapidly speed up processing times and eliminate the backlog of people waiting for initial asylum decisions by the end of 2023.

On 13 December 2022 the Prime Minister delivered an oral statement setting out a number of updates on the work ongoing to ease pressure on the asylum system. The aim is to clear the c.92k initial asylum decisions relating to claims made before 28 June 2022, when the Nationality and Borders Act measures came into force, by the end of 2023.

We are continuing to increase and aim to double the number of asylum decision makers, whilst improving productivity, volumes and speed of decision making so that people spend less time in asylum accommodation.

We are also streamlining and modernising the end-to-end process, with improved guidance, more focused and fewer interviews, enhancing use of digital technology, and we are introducing a more efficient approach to how claims are handled by decision makers.

■ Asylum: Children**Damien Moore:**[\[128705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential (a) merits of ensuring families seeking asylum are placed in local authorities rated outstanding for children's service and (b) impact of an inadequate rating on the quality of support given to (i) asylum seekers and (ii) to local children.

Robert Jenrick:

Wherever the Home Office explores accommodation, Multi-Agency Forums are held with the Local Authority and other key stakeholders before implementation. Any concerns relating to the Local Authority's ability to meet statutory requirements can be raised and discussed in that forum.

■ Asylum: Families**Damien Moore:** [\[128706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on ensuring that the families of asylum seekers are located in areas with services supporting vulnerable children and families.

Robert Jenrick:

The government is working to ensure the needs of asylum seekers on asylum support, including those with dependant family members, are met. We engage with Local Authorities to ensure asylum seekers have access to healthcare and social care services as well as education.

We work closely with the Department for Education. The latest published statistics from the Department for Education, for the year ending 31 March 2022, show there were 5,540 UASC being cared for in England alone, an increase of 34% from the previous reporting year and not reflecting the high intake seen last summer.

■ Asylum: Rwanda**Damien Moore:** [\[125480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda fulfils its objectives.

Robert Jenrick:

We continue to work closely with the Government of Rwanda to progress our groundbreaking Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP). Our focus remains on moving ahead with this arrangement as soon as possible in order to tackle the global migration crisis and disrupt the business model of criminal gangs who are putting lives at risk. We continue to defend the MEDP against further legal challenges.

■ Asylum: Sefton**Damien Moore:** [\[128704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that her Department holds discussions with Sefton Council on (a) accommodation and (b) support for children's services for asylum seekers ahead of any decisions being made.

Robert Jenrick:

We are committed to engaging with local authorities and local partners to understand and mitigate identified risks and the concerns of the wider community. The Home Office would work closely with the Subject Matter Experts to understand how best to support any proposed accommodation or services for asylum seekers prior to any decision being made to use stand up accommodation.

■ Asylum: Young People

Angela Crawley:

[123992]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) number and (b) quality of age assessments carried out by social workers following visual assessments by her Department's officials for the purposes of immigration and asylum; and whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent oversight body to conduct or commission analysis on age assessments.

Robert Jenrick:

If an assessment is conducted by a local authority the Home Office considers the assessment alongside other relevant evidence before a final decision is made for immigration purposes – this includes checking whether the assessment was conducted in compliance with caselaw. Decisions on age for immigration purposes fall within the remit of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration which monitors and reports on the effectiveness of the Home Office's immigration and asylum functions.

The Home Office publishes data on the number of age disputes and outcomes in table Asy_D05 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data covers up to November 2022. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'. The statistics do not currently distinguish between those who have been assessed to be significantly over 18 and others who have been age disputed but referred directly to a local authority for further assessment.

■ Immigration Controls: Staff

Stephen Kinnock:

[126683]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) Border Force personnel and (b) Immigration Liaison Officers are deployed overseas; and in which countries those personnel are based.

Stephen Kinnock:

[126684]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) Border Force personnel and (b) Immigration Liaison Officers were deployed overseas in each financial year since 2015-16.

Robert Jenrick:

For security reasons, the Home Office does not provide figures of how many staff have worked or are currently working at overseas deployments.

The Home Office continues to ensure appropriate overseas staff resourcing deployments are maintained.

Stephen Kinnock: [126685]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) resource budget of and (b) full-time equivalent workforce employed in her Department's Immigration Enforcement directorate was in each financial year since 2015-16.

Robert Jenrick:

The figures are in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts: [HO annual report and accounts 2020-21 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Stephen Kinnock: [126686]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the full-time equivalent workforce in her Department's Immigration Enforcement directorate is working on (a) returns preparation, (b) the National Returns Command, (c) immigration intelligence, (d) interventions and sanctions, (e) criminal and financial investigations and (f) other operational areas.

Robert Jenrick:

For security reasons, we do not disclose how many staff are working at a given time.

■ Immigration: Public Appointments

Ruth Jones: [124083]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of creating a commissioner for migrants.

Robert Jenrick:

In March 2020 the then Home Secretary published Wendy Williams's Windrush Lessons Learned Review, which set out 30 recommendations for the department.

A substantial amount of work has been done on considering options for delivering these recommendation, including discussions with external stakeholders.

After committing to working with the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) to deliver an internal review of our complaints procedures, we established the Office for the Independent Examiner of Complaints on the 17 October 2022. Furthermore, the Home Office has established the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Hub which has supported colleagues across the Department to deliver on improvements to engagement, in terms of accessibility and stakeholders being engaged in innovative ways. The aim to keep improving our engagement practices is being embedded into the Department's transformation programme.

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

Kate Osamor: [125427]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her answer of 17 January 2023 to question 119208 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review: Public Appointments, with which external stakeholders her Department has had discussions around the function of the recommendation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review to

establish the position of Migrants Commissioner.; and what other work her Department has done on implementation of that recommendation.

Robert Jenrick:

A substantial amount of work has been to consider options to deliver the recommendations from the Windrush Lessons Learned report.

The Home Office is taking steps to be more transparent to ensure that the department is as open to all types of scrutiny.. The Home Office keeps HASC and members of both houses updated on progress and will continue to do so.

■ **Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration: Publications**

Kate Osamor:

[\[125425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her answer of 17 January 2023 to question 119210 on Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration: Publications, with which external stakeholders her Department has had discussions around the function of the recommendation of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review to give the Independent Chief Inspector more powers with regard to publishing reports; and what other work her Department has done on implementation of that recommendation.

Robert Jenrick:

A substantial amount of work has been done on considering options for delivering recommendations from the Windrush Lessons Learned report.

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. The Department will update the Home Affairs Select Committee on the progress of all the Windrush Lessons Learned recommendations in due course.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[127786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to the Subject Access Request submitted in June 2022 from a constituent of the Hon. Member for Wirral West.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Department plans to respond to the subject access request by Friday 27th January 2023.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[128688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to respond to correspondence of 7 June 2022 from the hon. Member for Tooting, reference RA45733.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office replied on 23 January 2023.

■ Migrant Workers: Dental Services**Ruth Edwards:** [\[124143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of including dentists and dental nurses on the shortage occupations list.

Robert Jenrick:

Dentists and dental nurses are eligible occupations under the Health & Care visa route and their salary requirements are set according to national pay scales, which means they already receive comparable benefits to being on the Shortage Occupation List.

The Government launched the Health & Care visa in August 2020 making it easier, cheaper, and quicker for health workers to come to the UK to work compared to other immigration routes. Visa applicants pay a lower fee, they are subject to quicker processing time and also have a dedicated UKVI team that assists them with the application process. In addition, visa holders are exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ Police: Labour Turnover**Dan Carden:** [\[125464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve the level of retention in the police.

Chris Philp:

The retention of experienced police officers is a top priority. With the recruitment of additional 20,000 police officers across England and Wales, and over 15,000 officers already recruited, experienced officers have a vital role in supporting new recruits to thrive.

While voluntary resignation rates, at 2.5% percent, are low compared to other sectors, we are not complacent and continue to drive activity to retain valuable skills and experience. Priorities have included enshrining in law the Police Covenant, which will focus on improving the protection, health and wellbeing of officers, staff and their families.

We have also invested £1.1m for the College of Policing to create a National Leadership Centre to develop standards and a leadership development framework at all ranks to boost the quality of management and leadership and to provide clear pathways for career progression.

■ Police: Pay**Dan Carden:** [\[125465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Police Federation on the level of pay for police officers.

Chris Philp:

We welcome an open and regular dialogue from all key police stakeholders, including the Police Federation of England and Wales.

The independent Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) makes recommendations to the Government on the appropriate level of pay and allowances for police officers.

The PRRB gathers and invites parties to submit evidence to inform its recommendations. This includes both written and oral evidence from the Government, police employers and police staff associations. The PRRB weighs the evidence, considers independent research, and formulates detailed recommendations.

■ Police: Surveys**Dan Carden:**[\[125466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the results of the Police Federation's most recent annual survey.

Chris Philp:

The Police Federation of England and Wales' Pay and Morale survey 2022 is an important annual survey.

The Government is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all those working within or retired from policing roles and their families. This is why we have enshrined in law the Police Covenant, which is a pledge to do more as a nation to help those who serve our country and specifically to recognise their bravery, commitment, and sacrifices. Together with our delivery partners in the College of Policing and the staff associations, we have made significant progress on the initial priorities, including pre-employment mental health support for officers, the inclusion of wellbeing in HMICFRS Peel inspections and the creation of a new Chief Medical Officer for policing.

We are also working hard with policing during this unprecedented recruitment drive, ensuring forces can support new officers into the service with the training and supervision they need to thrive. The retention of experienced police officers is a priority for the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council. Voluntary resignation rates, at 2.5%, are low compared to other sectors.

We also want to ensure we are listening to the views of new officers, and we have recently surveyed almost 3,500 new recruits, which found that the majority of new recruits surveyed enjoy a positive onboarding experience, are satisfied with their jobs and want to remain officers for the rest of their working lives.

The independent Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) makes recommendations to the Government on the appropriate level of pay and allowances for police officers.

The PRRB gathers and invites parties to submit evidence to inform its recommendations. This includes both written and oral evidence from the Government, police employers and police staff associations. The PRRB weighs the evidence, considers independent research, and formulates detailed recommendations.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Tim Farron: [\[126576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make (a) an estimate of the number of people awaiting and (b) an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to facilitate family reunion for Afghans on Pathway One of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme who were evacuated under Operation Pitting.

Tim Farron: [\[126577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) consult and (b) take steps with agencies that have experience of family reunion processes to design a mechanism that will enable family reunion for Afghans on Pathway One of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme who were evacuated under Operation Pitting.

Robert Jenrick:

The government remains committed to providing protection for vulnerable and at-risk people fleeing Afghanistan, and we engage regularly with resettlement partner organisations in the UK and overseas further our work.

The situation in Afghanistan is very complex and presents significant challenges, including how those who are eligible for resettlement in the UK can leave the country. This includes the eligible family members of those being resettled under the ACRS. For those evacuated from Afghanistan under the ACRS without their immediate family members, further information will be made available in due course about options for reuniting with them.

In line with our existing policy, those resettled under ACRS may be able to be accompanied by their immediate family members - that is their spouse or partner, and dependent children under 18.

Those referred by UNHCR under the ACRS will have refugee status and will therefore be able to access the refugee family reunion route.

Those without refugee status wishing to bring family members would need to apply through the regular family visa route under Appendix FM of the Immigration Rules.

Whilst the UK has made a generous resettlement commitment, we must bear in mind the capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and therefore difficult decisions about who will be prioritised for resettlement have to be made.

Feryal Clark:

[\[126868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy and effectiveness of the process of family reunification under the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The government remains committed to providing protection for vulnerable and at-risk people fleeing Afghanistan. The situation is very complex and presents significant challenges, including how those who are eligible for resettlement in the UK can leave the country. This includes the eligible family members of those being resettled under the ACRS. For those evacuated from Afghanistan under the ACRS without their immediate family members, further information will be made available in due course about options for reuniting with them.

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Whilst the UK has made a generous resettlement commitment, we must bear in mind the capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and therefore difficult decisions about who will be prioritised for resettlement have to be made.

■ Security: Training

Julian Knight:

[\[126696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring people who hold licenses with the Security Industry Authority to undertake mental health first aid training.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is responsible for setting standards for the mandatory training required for each of the roles within the private security industry that it licenses. It reviews its training standards every five years. This process involves the industry and expert stakeholders and a significant amount of research and consultation.

Applicants for an SIA front line licence must undertake mandatory training that covers the duty of care with regard to vulnerable people, including identifying factors that could make someone vulnerable such as mental ill-health. For door supervisor and close protection licences, mandatory training includes identifying the risk factors involved with the use of physical intervention which include individual factors such as individuals with mental health issues (history of violence, prior experience of abuse and trauma).

■ Short-term Holding Facilities: Pregnancy

Stephen Farry:

[\[125521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department issues to Short Term Holding Facilities on time limits on the immigration detention of pregnant women under Section 60 (4) of the Immigration Act 201.

Robert Jenrick:

The Immigration Act 2016 makes it clear that pregnant women will be detained for the purposes of removal only if they are to be shortly removed from the UK or if there are exceptional circumstances which justify the detention.

Through section 60 of the Immigration Act 2016, which came into force on 12 July 2016, we have restricted the circumstances in which pregnant women may be detained; and placed a time limit on their detention of 72 hours. This is extendable up to a week in total, in exceptional circumstances, and only with Ministerial authority.

The section 60 limitations, along with our policy on adults at risk in detention, represent a comprehensive package of safeguards for pregnant women in the immigration system.

Under the AAR policy, vulnerable individuals can only be detained where their vulnerability is outweighed by immigration factors. Pregnancy is afforded significant weight when assessing the risk of harm in detention, and the fact of a person being pregnant will automatically amount to evidence of the highest level of vulnerability (level 3).

A Detention Services Order (DSO) on the care and management of pregnant women in detention was published on 1 November 2016. This DSO provides guidance for all Home Office, centre supplier and healthcare staff working in immigration removal centres (IRCs), pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and short-term holding facilities (STHF) where women are or may be detained, as well as escorting staff. This guidance can be found on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pregnant-women-in-detention>

■ Steroid Drugs: Misuse

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[125504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on tackling the (a) marketing and (b) sale of illegal steroids in the UK.

Chris Philp:

Drugs ruin lives and devastate communities, which is why the Government is committed to tackling both the supply and demand for drugs, including illicit anabolic steroids. Our ten-year Drug Strategy, From Harm to Hope, sets out a whole system approach to combat illicit drugs, through its three priorities: breaking drug supply chains; delivering a world-class treatment and recovery system; and achieving a significant reduction in demand for illicit drugs.

Anabolic steroids are controlled as Class C substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 because of the physical and psychological harms they cause. It is an offence to produce or supply steroids without a licence, unless a lawful exemption applies. It is also an offence to possess, import or export steroids with the intent to supply them, unless a licence or an exemption (for example, in healthcare) applies.

Law enforcement agencies continue to work with internet service providers to shut down UK-based websites found to be committing offences such as selling or marketing drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. And further measures to tackle the sale of controlled drugs – including the unlawful supply of anabolic steroids - are included in the Online Safety Bill, with companies required to take action to prevent criminal activity. If they fail to comply, they risk stiff financial penalties or in the most serious cases, having their sites blocked by the independent regulator, Ofcom.

■ **Visas: Married People**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[125286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to increase the Minimum Income Requirement for spousal visas.

Robert Jenrick:

The Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) was implemented in July 2012, following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee, reflecting the income at which a British family could no longer access income-related benefits. It was introduced to ensure family migrants are supported at a reasonable level, do not become a burden on the taxpayer and can participate sufficiently in everyday life to facilitate their integration into British society.

We keep all our immigration routes under review.

■ **Windrush Lessons Learned Review**

Ruth Jones:

[\[124085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with Wendy Williams on the Windrush Lessons Learned Review.

Robert Jenrick:

Following the initial Windrush Lessons Learned Review (WLLR) report, published in March 2020, Wendy Williams revisited the department and in March 2022 published the 'Windrush Lessons Learned Review – Progress Update'. This report outlines the work undertaken by the Home Office in response to her original review.

Wendy Williams concluded that there are several areas where very good progress has been made but rightly holds us to account in areas and on recommendations where we have not made sufficient progress.

A range of options have been considered for delivering the Windrush recommendations, including discussions with external stakeholders. We will also

keep the Home Affairs Select Committee updated on the progress of all the WLLR recommendations.

Kate Osamor:

[\[125426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her answer of 17 January 2023 to question 119209 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review, what additional steps her Department plans to take to implement Wendy William's recommendation to run a programme of reconciliation events with members of the Windrush generation.

Robert Jenrick:

We understand the importance and value of engaging with communities impacted by the Windrush scandal through face-to-face engagement. The Home Office has held over 200 public engagement and outreach events across the country to raise awareness of the Windrush Schemes. This includes 120 one-to-one surgeries attended by Windrush Help teams, to support people applying for documentation.

We recognise parliament has a keen interest in the progress of Wendy William's recommendations. The Home Office keeps HASC and members of both houses updated on progress and will continue to do so.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Waste Management

Ruth Jones:

[\[124078\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will meet the hon. Member for Newport West to discuss (a) recycling and (b) waste on the parliamentary estate.

Sir Charles Walker:

The Commission is always happy to hear from Members to understand their views, and a meeting will be arranged.

Parliament recently completed a 10-year environmental campaign. We set a target to reduce our waste by weight by 30% against our 2008/09 baseline. This target had been increased during the campaign due to our success in meeting the first target we set ourselves. At the end of the campaign, we had achieved a reduction of 61%. We also achieved a recycling and recovery rate of 65% against our target of 75% by 2020/21.

Future targets are in the process of consultation and approval. These will run through to 2050 with the future waste target being based on the waste hierarchy as well as a further target for the reduction of the total waste Parliament generates. Additional targets will be set for a circular economy.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Department for International Trade: Public Expenditure**

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[\[127831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2023 to Question 114753 on Department for International Trade: Public Expenditure, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the reduction of the Total Departmental Expenditure Limit; and whether she expects her Department to reduce its headcount in financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Nigel Huddleston:

Spending Review 2021 provided a £67.6 million cash increase for the Department for International Trade (DIT) over the Spending Review period, enabling HMG to transform and digitise its services for exporters and investors, maintain increased capacity to secure world class free trade agreements and continue to support the rules-based international trading system. Sustainable DIT workforce plans for 2023-24 and 2024-25 will be finalised as part of the current annual business planning process.

■ **Seed Potatoes: Exports**

Richard Thomson:

[\[114802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the statement made by the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine on 15 December 2022 at Hansard, vol 724, col 1206, that last year nearly 90% of all UK seed potato exports were to non-EU countries, to which countries the remainder of UK seed potato exports not sent to non-EU countries in 2021 were exported; and what tonnage of seed potatoes were exported to each of those countries in 2021.

Andrew Bowie:

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) data shows that in 2021, over 10% of UK seed potatoes were recorded as having been exported to the EU, in value terms.

By volume, HMRC data shows that 11,275 tonnes (around 14%) of UK seed potatoes were exported to EU countries in 2021. The net mass exported to each of those EU countries in 2021 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: UK exports of seed potatoes to EU countries in 2021, by mass

COUNTRY	SUM OF NET MASS (TONNES)
Spain	5,456
Netherlands	2,278
Ireland	2,168
Belgium	1,056

COUNTRY	SUM OF NET MASS (TONNES)
Germany	105
France	98
Poland	71
Romania	23
Lithuania	20
Hungary	0.2
Grand Total	11,275

■ Tradeshow Access Programme

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[126732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much of the funding allocated for Tradeshow Access Programmes remains unspent in 2022-23.

Andrew Bowie:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: Any unspent allocations are redirected to other forms of export support.

JUSTICE

■ Prison Officers: Recruitment

Steve Reed: [\[125377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications were received for a band 3-5 prison officer position in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

Table: Number of applications to Prison Officer roles, by year application submitted.

SUBMISSION YEAR	TOTAL
2017	103690
2018	101076
2019	65501
2020	83913
2021	78339

SUBMISSION YEAR	TOTAL
2022	97887

Notes:

1. Data were extracted from the Oleeo recruitment system. Oleeo is a live system so records are subject to change.
2. The figures used here are based on applications submitted between 01 April 2017 and 30 November 2022 inclusive, as of 2 December 2022.
3. Data was only collected on Oleeo from 1 April 2017 and so data is not available for earlier dates.
4. Data for 2022 is incomplete and is only available up to and including 30 November 2022.
5. Data provided show the number of applications rather than the number of applicants since Oleeo data is at the application level.
6. Figures included in our response only cover data available in our Oleeo system, so any recruitment that is not entirely processed on Oleeo will be incomplete.
7. The majority of prison officer recruitment is at Band 3 and is external to the civil service.
8. The majority of Band 4 and Band 5 recruitment is internal to the Civil Service. These figures include internal progression to Band 4 and 5 roles.
9. These figures include applications to the "Unlocked Graduate Scheme", and to Operational Support Grade to Prison Officer / Youth Justice Worker fast track campaigns.
10. Figures do not include recruitment campaigns managed by external companies.
11. This data only includes recruitment for Public Sector Prisons (PSP).
12. Youth Justice Worker applications are included in the count of Prison Officer applications.
13. During the pandemic in 2021, we rapidly re-entered the market with an accelerated recruitment campaign to increase joiners, capitalising on a buoyant marketplace. However, as industries began to reopen, and competition in the marketplace significantly increased, our application volumes began to fall.

■ **Prisoners: Police Custody**

Grahame Morris:

[\[127742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department most recently notified stakeholders that Operation Safeguard might be activated.

Damian Hinds:

The activation of Operation Safeguard was announced on 30 November 2022, via an oral statement. The Ministry of Justice issued a series of letters to key stakeholders on the activation of Operation Safeguard prior to the oral statement.

Operation Safeguard is a contingency that provides additional headroom for use as needed. We are not currently housing prisoners in police cells as a result of Operation Safeguard, however we remain in regular contact with relevant police forces. Before any police cells are used to house prisoners under Operation Safeguard, HMPPS will issue clear operational guidance to its staff and partners.

Operation Safeguard was previously triggered in 2006 and then in 2007 – 2008, and 82,615 prisoners were released between 2007-2010 under the early release scheme that followed.

Prisons: Staff**Steve Reed:**[\[125379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison staff who had to (a) take leave and (b) leave work as a result of being assaulted in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds:

HMPPS does not hold data centrally of prison staff absent as a result of total assaults, or staff who have left due to an assault within the last 5 years.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**Coastal Areas: Economic Growth****Virginia Crosbie:**[\[128732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if the Government will bring forward a strategy to improve economic growth in coastal communities.

Dehenna Davison:

Through our Coastal Communities Fund, which ran until 2022, we supported a huge number of projects in communities across the country, with a total investment of £187 million. We continue to level up our coastal communities with the £2.6 billion UK Shared prosperity Fund which will unlock further economic growth across the country, including in coastal areas.

In addition to this, seven out of the eight English Freeports are in coastal areas, while two coastal areas of Scotland have just been announced as successful following the Green Freeport bidding process. We continue discussions with the Welsh Government regarding the freeport programme in Wales.

Furthermore, 22 coastal areas are benefiting from over £673 million of investment via the Towns Fund. Such communities also continue to benefit from the Levelling Up

Fund, where we have just announced our support for over 100 more projects, including in the coastal communities of Blackpool, Cleethorpes and Great Yarmouth.

■ **Construction: Standards**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[125231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has received the report of the Independent Review of the Construction Products Testing Regime Review Panel; when he plans to publish the (a) report and (b) Government Response; and if he will make a statement.

Lee Rowley:

The Department commissioned an Independent Review of the system for testing construction products. This is a complex area and good progress has been made.

We expect to publish the review shortly and will respond in due course. I will keep the Hon. Member's committee updated on this work.

■ **Evictions and Homelessness**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[128720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to (a) protect renters from eviction and (b) support people who are homeless, in the context of the cost of living crisis; and what progress he has made on ending no fault evictions.

Felicity Buchan:

Ensuring a fair deal for renters remains a priority for this government, and we will legislate in this Parliament to abolish section 21 'no fault' evictions.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. That is why the government has previously taken action to support those who need it most worth over £37 billion in 2022-23.

Government is committed to preventing homelessness where possible. We have announced the allocation of £654 million in funding through the Homelessness Prevention Grant that will be made available to local authorities in 2023/24 and 2024/25. Local authorities can use this funding flexibly.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[128630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to open applications for the Levelling Up Fund Round 3.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[128631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Levelling Up Fund Round 3 will be the final round of funding; and how much funding will be made available in this round.

Lisa Nandy: [\[128632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the average cost to (a) councils and (b) mayoral combined authorities of preparing and submitting an application to the Levelling Up Fund Round 2.

Lisa Nandy: [\[128633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Prime Minister was involved in deciding successful bids for Levelling Up Fund Round 2.

Lisa Nandy: [\[128634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to paragraph 4.4 of his Department's guidance entitled Levelling Up Fund Round 2: explanatory note on the assessment and decision-making process published on 19 January 2023, whether local authorities with multiple bids shortlisted were consulted on which bid they wanted to prioritise.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [127879](#) on 24 January 2023.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Organs: Donors

Stephen Farry: [\[126875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps to introduce the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill to create an opt-out organ donation system in Northern Ireland as exists in the rest of the UK.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The absence of Northern Ireland Assembly business is causing unnecessary delays in the introduction of this life-saving legislation. It is one example of the devastating backlog of legislation that has been allowed to build up over the past 11 months without an Assembly. I urge the Northern Ireland parties to come back to the Executive, get back to work and take these decisions in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland.

I would be happy to meet with Dáithí Mac Gabhann's family to discuss this issue further.

■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [\[126874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what criteria the Government is using to ensure that New Deal funding will be used to support growth and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

The objectives of New Deal for Northern Ireland funding are helping to boost economic growth, increasing Northern Ireland's competitiveness overseas, and investing in infrastructure. Fostering economic growth is key to building a stable and prosperous future for Northern Ireland, and the £400m New Deal funding is enabling Northern Irish businesses and its people to innovate and invest.

Specific objectives include promoting Northern Ireland's potential as a leader in innovative technology and to invest in the skills of the people of Northern Ireland in key growth areas such as cybersecurity and green technology.

Further New Deal funded projects in development will also be directly targeted at supporting growth and prosperity. Additionally, any projects will have to pass a robust approvals process with HM Treasury, to ensure they offer value for money and are focused on the core objectives of the New Deal for Northern Ireland.

SCOTLAND■ **Scotland Office: Trade Unions****Chris Stephens:****[R] [127801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office does not employ any staff directly; all staff that join do so on an assignment, loan or secondment from other government bodies, principally the Ministry of Justice and the Scottish Government.

There is a range of HR information which is published on GOV.UK and is therefore publicly available. In addition, the employing departments share routine human resources information with their recognised trade unions as part of their normal engagement.

TRANSPORT■ **Bus Services****Rachael Maskell:****[128673]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to require all local authorities to review the adequacy of shelter provision at bus stops.

Mr Richard Holden:

The National Bus Strategy makes clear that we expect Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) (produced by all English Local Transport Authorities outside London) to review the impact of bus stops and shelters on passenger safety, security and accessibility. The BSIP Guidance requires bus stops to be safe and perceived to be

safe by all, and, where necessary, to be well-lit and covered by CCTV, and to show accurate information about services stopping there.

■ Bus Services: Disability

Rachael Maskell: [\[128670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of providing audio visual notifications on buses on disabled people.

Mr Richard Holden:

In 2018 we launched the Accessible Information consultation to understand the impact of proposals for mandating the provision of route and destination announcements onboard local bus services in Great Britain.

In the 2021 National Bus Strategy the Department committed to introducing Accessible Information Regulations, and we are currently finalising our response to the consultation, ahead of making the Regulations later this year.

Rachael Maskell: [\[128671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help improve the accessibility of buses.

Rachael Maskell: [\[128672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to ensure all new buses include two wheelchair spaces.

Mr Richard Holden:

The 2021 National Bus Strategy seeks to make travelling by bus and coach easier for disabled passengers.

We will mandate the provision of audible and visible route and location information onboard local services in Great Britain, and are improving the availability of data on the accessibility of buses.

We also require buses funded by the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme to incorporate additional accessibility features, including a second wheelchair space or flexible area.

The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) require vehicles subject to them to incorporate a wheelchair space and boarding ramp or lift. I recognise that such provision might be inadequate for wheelchair users wishing to travel together, or at busy times, and I applaud operators who have innovated in the provision of a second space.

We have committed to review PSVAR by the end of 2023, to ensure that future decisions on accessibility standards are based on an up-to-date understanding of passenger need. We will shortly launch a Call for Evidence to seek evidence on the extent to which existing bus design and accessibility features are effective in facilitating an accessible service.

Martyn Day:

[\[128687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2022 to Question 114799 on Bus Services: Disability, when the response to the accessible information consultation will be published; and what progress he has made on laying the Accessible Information Regulations before Parliament.

Mr Richard Holden:

We are currently finalising our response to the Accessible Information consultation, and plan to publish this and lay the Regulations later in 2023.

■ **Driving Instruction: Wales**

Hywel Williams:

[\[128609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving instructors there were in Wales in each of the last five years; and how many of these instructors were able to conduct tests in Welsh.

Hywel Williams:

[\[128610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of the 436 additional driving instructors announced have been recruited; how many have been recruited in North Wales as of 19 January 2023; and of those recruited in North Wales how many are able to conduct tests in Welsh

Hywel Williams:

[\[128611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time for practical car driving tests is in North Wales.

Mr Richard Holden:

	NUMBER OF DRIVING EXAMINERS	
	NUMBER OF DRIVING EXAMINERS ABLE TO CONDUCT TESTS IN IN WALES	WELSH
2022	98	8
2021	90	13
2020	88	13
2019	89	13
2018	95	No historic data held

We have recently recruited 403 driving examiners, of which 25 are in Welsh test centres.

Waiting times in Wales for car practical driving tests have reduced from 18.3 weeks as of 21 June 2021 to 12.5 weeks as of 16 January 2023.

On 13 January 2023, the DVSA launched its latest campaign to recruit another 183 DE posts.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[126757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the increase in the cost of charging electric vehicles via the public charging network on drivers of those vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

Industry statistics show that new UK electric vehicle sales overtook diesel sales in 2022, with over 1 in every 5 cars sold having a plug. It is clear that the public continue to realise the benefits of switching to electric vehicles.

The vast majority of drivers of electric vehicles continue to benefit from significant savings on the cost of fuel. It is still cheaper to charge a vehicle on slow and fast public charge points than to fill up a petrol or diesel car, according to average industry statistics from November 2022.

Charging at rapid and ultra-rapid public charge points is on average around the same or slightly more expensive than the cost of filling up a petrol car. However, relatively few drivers solely rely on these chargers for a large part of their charging demand.

Charging a medium-sized electric car at home at rates equivalent to the electricity price cap from 1 October 2022 equates to around half the cost of filling up an equivalent petrol vehicle. Some suppliers continue to offer tariffs enabling drivers to run their electric vehicle at under 3p per mile, while charging overnight.

■ **Local Transport Plans**

Rachael Maskell: [\[128675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to ensure that all local authorities have an up to date local transport plan in place.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local Transport Plans are important in setting out a strategy for improving transport in a local area. The Local Transport Act 2008 removed the obligation on local transport authorities to replace their LTPs every five years, so that they can instead update their plan as they see fit. However, new statutory LTP guidance is being developed for publication in 2023, to include advice on the timespan and potential trigger points for reviewing and updating LTPs.

■ **Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) (No. 2) Regulations 1973**

Stella Creasy: [\[128635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans he has to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) (No 2) Regulations 1973.

Jesse Norman:

The Department is currently reviewing all transport-related Retained EU Law. It will set out its approach to individual pieces of Retained EU Law, including the Motor Vehicles (compulsory insurance) (No 2) Regulations 1973, in due course.

Public Transport: Dogs**Mark Pritchard:**[\[127718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many dog attacks were recorded on public transport in the latest period for which data is available.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport does not record or hold this data centrally.

Railway Stations: Wildlife**Rachael Maskell:**[\[128679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to end the killing of (a) pigeons and (b) other wildlife at (i) York station and (ii) other stations.

Huw Merriman:

Station risks including the control of pigeons and other wildlife at stations are a matter for the Train Operating Company or Network Rail where they manage the station. Responsible parties are expected to invest in humane deterrents to discourage birds from perching, roosting and nesting in station facilities which may involve rubbish removal, placing netting or providing artificial nesting sites nearby. The success of these measures will reduce the need for lethal control.

At York Railway Station, LNER have invested in several measures to reduce the number of pigeons, as they cause public and staff safety issues. LNER are continuing to review their approach to sustainably manage the issues related to pigeons and other wildlife at York station whilst maintaining a safe environment for passengers and staff.

Railways: Strikes**Dan Carden:**[\[128702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment he has made of the costs of (a) indemnifying train companies from losses on strike days and (b) meeting rail workers' union's pay demands.

Huw Merriman:

No compensation has been paid by the Department to train operators to cover lost revenue due to strike action. Under the terms of the operator agreements put in place since the onset of COVID, the Government is on revenue risk not operators and hence operators are not financially affected by any fluctuations in revenue.

■ Railways: Wales**Hywel Williams:**[\[128612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Railways high level output specification 2022 and Railways statement of funds available 2022 published on 1 December 2022, how much of the funding for Network Rail expenditure he plans to allocate to Wales.

Huw Merriman:

The Secretary of State's High-level Output Specification and Statement of Funds Available for Control Period 7 were published in December 2022. These documents set Network Rail's high-level operations, maintenance and renewals objectives and funding envelope in England and Wales. Enhancements are excluded as these are planned and funded separately. The precise allocation of funding between Network Rail's different regions, including Wales, is decided by Network Rail's business planning process and is subject to the determinations of the independent regulator, the Office of Rail and Road.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Safety Belts**Matt Western:**[\[128693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to introduce penalty points on driving licences for people who fail to wear a seatbelt while (a) in control of and (b) a passenger in a car.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government keeps all motoring offences and penalties under review.

■ Southeastern: Timetables**Clive Efford:**[\[126519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department received an equality impact assessment on the changes to the timetable implemented by Southeastern on 11 December 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Huw Merriman:

The Department received a draft copy of the Southeastern's Equality Impact Assessment on the 23 November 2022.

■ Travel: Concessions**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[126745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the (a) scope of and (b) eligibility for (i) free and (ii) discounted student travel in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Mr Richard Holden:

Local authorities already have the powers to extend both the scope and eligibility of free and discounted student travel if it makes sense in their area.

TREASURY■ **Business Rates**

Anthony Browne: [\[126849\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses are paying (a) higher and (b) smaller multiplier rates.

Victoria Atkins:

The small business multiplier for 2022-23 is 49.9p and the standard multiplier is 51.2p. These rates will remain the same for 2023-24.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities publishes statistics on the numbers of businesses that pay each multiplier. These statistics are available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1060753/NNDR1_2022-23_Supplementary_table_ecomms.xlsx

Anthony Browne: [\[126850\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of business rates revenue came from (a) higher and (b) smaller multiplier rates bands in each of the last ten years.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government does not collect data on total business rates yield disaggregated by ratepayers paying the small and large multiplier multipliers.

Anthony Browne: [\[126851\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the reduction in the business rates multiplier from 2016-17 to 2017-18 on total income received.

Victoria Atkins:

The business rates multiplier is adjusted at each revaluation to offset changes in aggregate rateable value in England. This process is revenue neutral and ensures that business rate revenue remains fixed in real terms.

At the 2017 revaluation the multiplier was reduced to 46.6p in 2017-18 from 48.4p in 2016-17. The reduction in the rate of the multiplier reflected an aggregate increase in rateable value in England of 9.6 per cent.

Business rates raise over £20 billion a year in England to fund vital local services - there is no alternative with widespread support that would raise sufficient revenue to replace them.

■ **Debts: Ghana**

Alexander Stafford: [\[126884\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with G20 counterparts on the potential merits of cancelling some or all of Ghana's international debts.

Andrew Griffith:

The UK welcomes Ghana's request for a debt treatment under the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. We stand ready to deliver a debt treatment for Ghana under the Common Framework in a timely and efficient manner. We look forward to the swift formation of a creditor committee for Ghana which will discuss and agree the parameters of a debt treatment.

Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[126758\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing the rate of VAT for public electric vehicle charging in line with the rate of charging at home.

Victoria Atkins:

In order to keep costs down for families, the supply of electricity for domestic use, including charging an electric vehicle (EV) at home, attracts the reduced rate of VAT (five per cent). However, electricity supplied at EV charging points in public places is subject to the standard rate of VAT (twenty per cent).

The Government has not specifically introduced a reduced rate for charging EVs at home. However, the practical challenges of differentiating between the electricity used at home for general domestic purposes, and electricity used to charge EVs currently mean that the reduced rate is effectively being applied to EV charging at home.

Introducing a VAT relief for public EV charging to match the VAT treatment of domestic fuel and power would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution. VAT is the UK's third largest tax forecast to raise £157 billion in 2022/23, helping to fund key spending priorities such as important public services, including the NHS, education and defence.

The Government is committed to supporting the transition to zero emission vehicles to help the UK meet its net zero obligations. The Government has committed £2.5 billion since 2020 to support the transition to zero emission vehicles, which funds targeted vehicle incentives and the rollout of charging infrastructure.

Freight**Gareth Thomas:**[\[126520\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of canalisation procedures for speeding up airside freight transshipment times; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[126521\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reforming canalisation for (a) reducing cargo emissions and (b) increasing exports; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[126522\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) aviation partners and (b) stakeholders on the potential merits of a trial to assess the merits of reforming canalisation; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

As the customs authority, HMRC works alongside Border Force to ensure that border processes are as smooth as possible, whilst targeting cross-border threats.

The 2025 UK Border strategy sets out the Government's vision for the UK border to be the most effective border in the world. At its core, that strategy is about making it as straightforward as possible for businesses to comply with customs requirements whilst keeping the UK safe and protecting our fiscal interests.

To achieve this strategy, the Government is working in partnership with industry to drive forward a programme of modernisation and innovation to improve the end-to-end passage for goods imported and exported through all the UK's airports and sea ports, including canalisation.

■ Ghana: Debts

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[125439\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he supports Ghana's request for an expedited process for debt relief through the G20 Common Framework.

Andrew Griffith:

The UK welcomes Ghana's request for a debt treatment under the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. We stand ready to deliver a debt treatment for Ghana under the Common Framework in a timely and efficient manner.

■ Insurance Companies: Reform

Rushanara Ali: [\[127764\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of a potential impact of the Government's proposed Solvency II reforms on the level of risk to the financial stability of the banking sector.

Andrew Griffith:

The Solvency II reforms strike a careful balance between boosting growth and maintaining high standards of policyholder protection. Insurers will still have to hold enough capital to withstand a 1-in-200-year shock. They will still have to adhere to high standards of risk management and will still be comprehensively supervised by

our world-class independent regulator. The Government has announced a suite of additional supervisory measures the PRA will be taking forwards to hold insurers to account in maintaining safety, soundness, and policyholder protection.

Rushanara Ali: [\[127765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial assessment his Department has made on the effect of the proposed Solvency II reforms on the public purse.

Andrew Griffith:

The Solvency II reforms strike a careful balance between boosting growth and maintaining high standards of policyholder protection. Insurers will still have to hold enough capital to withstand a 1-in-200-year shock. They will still have to adhere to high standards of risk management and will still be comprehensively supervised by our world-class independent regulator. The Government has announced a suite of additional supervisory measures the PRA will be taking forwards to hold insurers to account in maintaining safety, soundness, and policyholder protection.

■ **Medicine: Imports**

Navendu Mishra: [\[127922\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value of medical imports from India has been in each Financial Year since 2018.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly, as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), which is available via their dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com). From this website, it is possible to [build your own data tables](#) based upon bespoke search criteria.

Classification codes (according to the Harmonised System) are available to assist you in accessing published trade statistics data in the [UK Global Tariff](#). Goods moving to and from the UK are identified by an eight-digit commodity code. These are publicly available from the UK Trade Tariff at <https://www.gov.uk/trade-tariff>.

The term 'medical' goods could cover a wide range of commodity codes.

Trade data related to imports from India is publicly available on www.uktradeinfo.com.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Tax Allowances**

Mr William Wragg: [\[126697\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) reducing and (b) removing the vehicle tax on a vehicle used to assist a person with disabilities.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting disabled people and is determined that support should be focused on people who need it most. Individuals in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance and its successor, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), qualify for a full exemption from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED). A fifty per cent reduction in VED is available to those in receipt of the PIP standard rate mobility component.

More information can be found on the Gov.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vehicles-and-transport>.

As with all taxes, VED remains under review and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

Public Houses: VAT**David Warburton:****[127865]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to reinstate the lower rate of VAT for food and beverages sold in pubs.

Victoria Atkins:

The VAT reduced rate for the hospitality sector was a temporary measure designed to support the cash flow and viability of sectors that have been severely affected by COVID-19. It was appropriate that as restrictions were lifted and demand for goods and services in these sectors increased, the temporary tax reliefs were first reduced and then removed in order to rebuild and strengthen the public finances.

According to OBR forecasts, VAT will have raised approximately £157 billion in 2022/23, helping to fund key spending priorities such as important public services, including the NHS and policing. In addition, this request should be viewed in the context of over £50 billion of requests for relief from VAT received since the EU referendum.

While there are no plans to reduce the rate of VAT on food and beverages sold in pubs, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

Safe Hands Plans: Finance**Nick Smith:****[127725]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120941 on 17 January 2023 on Safe Hands Plans: Finance, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Financial Conduct Authority's response to concerns raised by his Department regarding Safe Hands Funeral Plans; and whether he will publish his Department correspondence with the Financial Conduct Authority on that issue.

Nick Smith:**[127726]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120941 on Safe Hands Plans: Finance, what estimate his Department has had

made of the number of consumers who were at risk from Safe Hands Funeral Plans in July 2017.

Nick Smith: [\[127727\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120941 on Safe Hands Plans: Finance, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to Safe Hands' customers at the time that those concerns were raised.

Nick Smith: [\[127728\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120941 on Safe Hands Plans: Finance, whether his departmental officials contacted representative's of Safe Hands Plans to inquire into the risk those plans posed to consumers.

Nick Smith: [\[127729\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120941 on Safe Hands Plans: Finance, whether his Department holds data on (a) how many more consumers bought a Safe Hands Plan after July 2017, and (b) the estimated average loss to each consumer who had bought a plan.

Andrew Griffith:

Safe Hands Plans went into administration in March 2022. The government understands that this situation is very concerning for customers of Safe Hands.

Since being made aware of misconduct across the funeral plan sector in 2017, the government and Financial Conduct Authority have dedicated significant resource to regulate the sector fully. This has ensured that those trying to make financial arrangements for their funerals now have the right regulatory protections.

The government's work to bring pre-paid funeral plans into regulation has ensured that – for the first time – 1.6 million funeral plan consumers are protected from poor practice within the sector. Because of the action taken, it is now a criminal offence to sell pre-paid funeral plans without FCA authorisation.

■ Taxation: Fines

Angela Rayner: [\[128644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much was paid to HMRC in tax penalties for (a) underpayment and (b) late payment in the period between 1 January 2022 and 1 January 2023.

Victoria Atkins:

Below is a table providing the total value of penalties issued (rounded to the nearest £ million) and the number of penalties issued (rounded to the nearest thousand) between 2019-20 to 2021/22.

In addition, our penalty data is reported by financial, not calendar, years, so have provided data for the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.

TAX YEARS	TOTAL VALUE OF PENALTIES ISSUED	NUMBER OF PENALTIES ISSUED
2019/20	£329m	76k
2020/21	£239m	65k
2021/22	£366m	106k

■ Treasury: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[\[126569\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January to Question 118883, whether any alcoholic beverages were included in the cost of the event.

James Cartlidge:

In November 2021, UK Government Investments (UKGI) hired a room in the House of Lords to host an alumni reception for over one hundred attendees.

This networking evening furthered the aims of UKGI to maintain close external links to sectors and individuals with the specific experience and expertise UKGI needs.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[\[127708\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has employed (a) consultants and (b) businesses to provide advice on trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Victoria Atkins:

With respect to customs, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has employed consultants to deliver the protocol and advise on trade between Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI). Furthermore, the Government has carried out an extensive programme of business engagement in relation to the movement of goods between GB and NI.

HMRC does not hold data on other Government departments in relation to the matters specified.

WALES**■ Wales Office: Equality**

Chris Stephens: [R] [[128666](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what steps he is taking to ensure his Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code; and whether that monitoring data gathered is shared with union representatives.

David T C Davies:

My Department regularly reviews Human Resources (HR) data to ensure compliance with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code. The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is not an employer in its own right. Our employment services including HR policies are provided by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) who share appropriate monitoring data with departmental trade unions on our behalf.

■ Wales Office: Trade Unions

Chris Stephens: [R] [[127803](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

David T C Davies:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales is not an employer in its own right. Our employment services are provided by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) who regularly share appropriate information with departmental trade unions on our behalf. There is also a range of HR information which is published on GOV.UK.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Disability: Cost of Living**

Rachel Hopkins: [[903314](#)]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on support for disabled people with rising energy, food and fuel costs.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [[903316](#)]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on support for disabled people with rising energy, food and fuel costs.

Mims Davies:

At the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced further Cost of Living payments in 2023/24 – as part of a package worth twenty-six billion pounds – this included additional support for disabled people.

I am delighted to be the Minister bringing forward this vital legislation to support people most in need.

■ **Employment: Menopause**

Justin Madders:

[\[903318\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to help support women experiencing the menopause in the workplace.

Mims Davies:

DWP commissioned an independent report on menopause and the workplace, as part of regular engagement with the members of the 50 PLUS Roundtable on older workers, which was published in November 2021. The Government's response was outlined in July last year.

In the response, the Government committed to appoint a DWP Menopause Employment Champion who will work with the Women's Health Ambassador on the issue of menopause and employment and drive forward work with employers on menopause workplace issues.

This commitment was reaffirmed in the Government's response to the Women and Equalities Select Committee report yesterday in our response to recommendation 6.

■ **Rape: Ukraine**

Nicola Richards:

[\[903313\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help tackle the use of rape as a weapon of war in Ukraine.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We are working closely with the Ukrainian government on tackling conflict-related sexual violence, including through UK expertise to support investigations through the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group and the International Criminal Court.

As part of the UK's £220 million of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, we are helping ensure legal support and crisis accommodation for victims and documentation of gender-based violence cases.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Children: Maintenance**

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[125229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department plans to increase the flat rate of child maintenance payments in light of the recent increases in the cost of living.

Mims Davies:

There are no current plans to increase the flat rate of child maintenance payments. The child maintenance calculation was designed to be fair for the paying parent, while ensuring they contribute a significant proportion of their income to support their children.

A banding system ensures that the very lowest earners pay a flat rate of £7 per week, and those with no income pay nothing. Those that can afford to make a bigger contribution do so at a rate that reflects what they earn.

Alex Sobel:[\[125469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing the policy of the Child Maintenance Service to ensure that parents with historic unpaid child maintenance make repayments apportioned equally amongst cases rather than the current order of priority in use for the recovery of arrears.

Mims Davies:

The Child Maintenance Services (CMS) main focus is to collect money owed to children who will benefit today, thereby preventing the build-up of arrears under CMS.

Therefore, the CMS continues to prioritise the collection of maintenance on cases that are still supporting a qualifying child.

When the ongoing maintenance on these cases has been satisfied, any remaining funds will be allocated, as per CMS payment allocation hierarchy, to cases with historic arrears on them.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Trade Unions**Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[127787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: Senior Departmental officials meet with Departmental Trade Union Side to discuss resourcing issues including finance, demand, and recruitment.

As part of the annual delegated pay negotiations, the department provides the three trade unions that are recognised in DWP with detailed information on pay, including pay scales and where employees currently sit within these.

Individual Departmental Directors with responsibility for Service Delivery meet trade unions annually to discuss the resourcing position specific to their area of work. In addition, Departmental Directors meet trade unions regularly to update and share information on issues such as resources, staffing, workloads, performance, health and safety and wellbeing.

There is also a range of publicly available HR information published on GOV.UK.

■ Employment: Death

Nick Fletcher:

[\[128727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many fatalities have occurred in the workplace by sex in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Mims Davies:

As the regulator for workplace health and safety, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) collects information on fatal injuries resulting from work-related accidents.

Statistics of work-related fatal injuries by sex are published by HSE on [HSE's website](#). Published statistics for work-related fatal injuries by sex for 2017/18 to 2021/22 are as follows:

NUMBER OF FATAL INJURIES TO WORKERS

Year	All	Male	Female
2017/18	141	135	6
2018/19	149	142	7
2019/20	113	110	3
2020/21 (revised)	145	141	4
2021/22 (provisional)	123	116	7

Source: Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR).

■ Pensions

Darren Jones:

[\[126767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many officials are employed to administer pensions.

Laura Trott:

All DWP colleagues employed within our Retirement Services Directorate equate to 6,460 FTE (full time equivalent) resource as of 31st December 2022. This takes into account all grades working within the Retirement Services Directorate.

Notes:

- Data is correct as of 31st December 2022.
- Figures for Retirement Services were derived from the Department's Activity Based Model (ABM), which provides Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures of colleagues employed within this directorate based on point in time estimate by Line Managers.
- The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures has been rounded off to the nearest 10.

- The number of colleagues employed in these directorates is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. As the Department holds the information, we have released it.
- Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures only included colleagues employed by DWP only and does not include any external outsourced employees.

■ **Restart Programme: Contracts**

Alison McGovern:

[\[126629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the underspend on the Restart scheme contract exceeded £1.2 billion.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: As per the NAO report, the original estimated cost for Restart was £2.58bn, this has been revised to £1.68bn creating a £0.9m underspend.

The underspend is not expected to exceed £1.2bn. The original value of the contracts was £2.6bn. As explained in the accounting officer note in July 2022 and the NAO report, the lower numbers participating in the programme due to the better than anticipated labour market position means the spend is expected to be around £1.7bn – so the underspend is expected to be around £0.9bn. Payment is contingent on performance and that the Department retains options to refer more people and to extend the programme so we cannot yet confirm a final spend figure for the programme.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Overpayments**

Neil Coyle:

[\[126687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 121021 on Social Security Benefits: Overpayments, how many claimants have contacted the Department's Debt Management team to discuss a temporary reduction in their rate of repayment in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

We have recently introduced a broad measure of the proportion of customers who have a reduction in their repayment terms. This currently stands at 13%.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Terminal Illnesses**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[128640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to Marie Curie's briefing entitled Dying in Poverty: Improving financial support for terminally ill people with the cost of living, what assessment he has made of that organisation's findings on the potential merits of offering all terminally ill people access to the state pension.

Laura Trott:

No assessments have been made on early access to the State Pension for terminally ill people.

Hearing that your illness cannot be cured can be a frightening and devastating experience. For those at the end of their life, the Government's priority is providing financial support quickly and compassionately. The main way that the Department does this is through special benefit rules, sometimes referred to as "the Special Rules". These enable people who are nearing the end of their lives to get faster, easier access to certain benefits, without needing to attend a medical assessment, serve waiting periods and in most cases, receive the highest rate of benefit. For many years, the Special Rules have applied to people who have 6 months or less to live and now they are being changed so they apply to people who have 12 months or less to live.

Alex Cunningham:[\[128641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of providing early access to the state pension for working aged people with a terminal illness.

Laura Trott:

The Department has not held any such discussions.

■ Universal Credit**Darren Jones:**[\[126766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many officials are employed to administer universal credit.

Guy Opperman:

All DWP colleagues employed within our Universal Credit Directorate equate to 35,390 FTE (full time equivalent) resource as of 31st December 2022. This takes into account all grades working within the Universal Credit Directorate.

Notes:

- Data is correct as of 31st December 2022.
- Figures for Universal Credit were derived from the Department's Activity Based Model (ABM), which provides Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures of colleagues employed within this directorate based on point in time estimate by Line Managers.
- The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures has been rounded off to the nearest 10.
- The number of colleagues employed in these directorates is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. As the Department holds the information, we have released it.
- Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures only included colleagues employed by DWP only and does not include any external outsourced employees.

■ Universal Credit: Young People**Alex Cunningham:**[\[126631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on what evidential basis he lowered the Universal Credit Standard Allowance for people aged under 25.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: Universal Credit simplifies the rates of benefit for young people. The rates for those under age 25 are lower than those aged 25 and over to reflect the fact that these claimants are more likely to live in someone else's household and have lower living costs. It also reflects the lower wages that younger workers typically receive. However, it is acknowledged that some claimants under 25 do live independently, which is why Universal Credit includes separate elements to provide support to claimants for these additional costs.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Accountancy

John Cryer:

[102750]

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Mark Spencer:

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

Details of Core Defra contracts (which include its agencies) from 2010 to 2016 awarded to Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers can be found in the attached spreadsheet.

Attachments:

1. **PQ 102750 Consultancy Contracts (1).xlsx**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Vaccination Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy) (Maria Caulfield): [\[HCWS518\]](#)

Since the first Covid-19 vaccine was authorised for use in the UK in December 2020, the aim of the Covid-19 vaccination programme has been, and continues to be, the reduction of severe disease (hospitalisation and mortality) across the population, whilst protecting the NHS.

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has provided interim advice on the 2023 Covid-19 vaccination programme for planning purposes.

The JCVI's interim advice is that:

1. in autumn 2023, persons at higher risk of severe Covid-19 would be offered a booster vaccine dose in preparation for winter 2023/24;
2. in addition, for a smaller group of persons (such as persons of older age and those who are immunosuppressed) an extra booster vaccine dose may be offered in spring 2023;
3. emergency surge vaccine responses may be required should a novel variant of concern emerge with clinically significant biological differences compared to the Omicron variant.

The JCVI has also provided advice on the ongoing offer of initial Covid-19 vaccination (primary course) and 2021 booster dose offers (third dose). As the transition continues away from a pandemic emergency response towards pandemic recovery, the JCVI considers that the risk of severe Covid-19 continues to be disproportionately greater in those from older age groups, residents in care homes for older adults and for persons with certain underlying health conditions.

The JCVI's advice is that:

1. the 2021 booster offer (third dose) for persons aged 16 to 49 years who are not in a clinical risk group should end in alignment with the close of the autumn 2022 vaccination campaign;
2. otherwise healthy persons aged 5 to 49 years, who develop a new health condition in 2023 that places them in a clinical risk group would be offered primary vaccination and/or a booster vaccine during the next seasonal vaccination campaign, as appropriate. Vaccination outside these campaign periods would be subject to individual clinical judgement;

3. primary course (initial doses) of Covid-19 vaccination should move, over the course of 2023, towards a more targeted offer during vaccination campaigns to protect those persons at higher risk of severe Covid-19; this would include:

- a) residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults
- b) frontline health and social care workers
- c) all adults aged 50 years and over
- d) persons aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group
- e) persons aged 12 to 49 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression
- f) persons aged 16 to 49 years who are carers

4. research should be considered to inform the optimal timing of booster vaccinations to protect against severe Covid-19 (hospitalisations and death) for groups who are at different levels of clinical risk.

His Majesty's Government has accepted the JCVI's advice. In England, the 2021 booster offer (third dose) for persons aged 16 to 49 years who are not in a clinical risk group will end in alignment with the close of the autumn 2022 campaign in England on 12 February 2023. The JCVI's advice to target the initial vaccination (primary course) offer to those at higher risk from Covid-19 has been accepted by HMG subject to further consideration of timings.

I am informed that all four parts of the UK intend to accept the JCVI's advice on the same basis.

I will update the House when further advice is received from the JCVI on the Covid-19 vaccination programmes recommended for 2023, including confirmation of whether a spring booster programme is advised.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ DLUHC Update

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS519\]](#)

One of the Prime Minister's top priorities is growing the economy, spreading opportunity right across the country. Levelling Up is central to that mission. Today I am delighted to update the House on further progress being made to deliver the right foundations for growth through increased innovation, strong local leadership, and pride in place for communities.

First, on Investment Zones. This country has no shortage of growth industries, whether in advanced manufacturing, renewable industries or life sciences. And we have no shortage of world-class universities. But where we have underperformed is leveraging the success

of these industries and research to support growth across the whole country. That is my guiding mission for Investment Zones. We will shortly begin a process to identify where Zones will be located, guided by three principles. First, that government cannot create clusters, but it can create the conditions for them to succeed. Second, success requires fiscal support, but also a wider range of interventions, whether land assembly, housing, transport, or skills, to tackle the specific barriers each cluster faces to growth. And third, that can only happen in partnership with strong local leadership over the long-term.

Second, on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Working with BEIS, DEFRA, DFT and HMT we are modernising the approach to major projects and we will shortly publish an Action Plan setting out reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime that will streamline and speed up the consenting process. These important reforms will boost investor confidence in major infrastructure and help Government to improve energy security, achieve net zero and deliver the transport connectivity, water and waste management facilities this country needs.

Third, on backing local leadership to regenerate their local areas. I am today announcing that I will shortly lay before Parliament secondary legislation setting up two new mayoral development corporations in Tees Valley. These will drive a major regeneration of Hartlepool and Middlesbrough town centres and attract businesses and people back to these centres making them vibrant, safe, and pleasant places in which to live and work. We are also in talks with both Greater Manchester and the West Midlands to strengthen the hands of both mayors. We are exploring options to devolve more power, including in areas like housing, to these Combined Authorities. Further details will be set out in the trailblazer devolution deals that will be published in due course. Alongside this, as part of our national reforms to ensure that all homes are free from the types of poor conditions and hazards that led to the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, I am today announcing £30 million to support the Mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands Combined Authorities to support improvements in the quality of social housing in their areas.

Fourth, as we take steps to devolve more power to local leaders we are also backing this with clear accountability. We announced in the Levelling Up White Paper that we would establish a new Office for Local Government (Oflog), which will empower citizens to hold local leaders to account, while supporting local leaders to innovate and drive self-improvement. I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Lord (Amyas) Morse to the position of interim Chair of the Office for Local Government. Lord Morse brings to the role a wealth of experience in public sector service delivery and performance, and will provide independent advice, support and challenge to OfLog's strategic vision, functions and delivery. My department will shortly recruit for a new Chief Executive for this important body.

Fifth, to level up truly we must also ensure that people feel safe in their communities. We know that this is a real priority for our communities who want strong, practical action to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Graffiti, vandalism, disorder and evidence of drug use makes daily life a misery. Indeed, for many, tackling this blight is a prerequisite to levelling up. This requires a multifaceted response. Working with the Home Office, Department for Education and Ministry of Justice, we will shortly announce plans that will

deliver for communities, giving them the confidence that the places they love can and will be protected and enhanced.