



Daily Report

Thursday, 26 January 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 26 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

■ Intestacy

Matthew Pennycook:

[\[129848\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, who is responsible for determining whether an empty residential property is bona vacantia.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Treasury Solicitor acts for the Crown to administer the estates of people who die intestate (without a Will) and without known kin (entitled blood relatives) and collect the assets of dissolved companies and other various ownerless goods in England and Wales. The Bona Vacantia Division (BVD) of the Government Legal Department (GLD) deals with these matters on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor. BVD is responsible for determining whether an empty property is bona vacantia where they have been notified of the asset in relation to a dissolved company or a deceased person's estate.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Alternative Fuel Payments: Voluntary Organisations

Liz Twist:

[\[125450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 121055, on Alternative Fuel Payments: Biofuels, whether he has made an assessment of the impact on the activities of off-grid sports and community organisations of delays in the delivery of the Alternative Fuel Payments scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is committed to delivering the Non-Domestic Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme and will announce further details in the near future.

■ Alzheimer's Disease and Parkinson's Disease: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[125337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential of New Approach Methodologies to progress research into (a) Alzheimer's disease and (b) Parkinson's disease.

George Freeman:

The Government actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of non-animal technologies. This is achieved primarily through funding from UKRI for the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs), which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of approaches that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research.

Since the NC3Rs was launched in 2004 it has committed £49.2M for research and innovation in non-animal technologies. This includes a recent £4.7M commitment to accelerate the use of non-animal technologies, with £3.7M invested through a joint UKRI-BBSRC and NC3Rs call and an additional £1M committed by UKRI for the development of non-animal technologies to support ageing research.

Carbon Emissions**Clive Lewis:**[\[126739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Mission Zero - the Independent Review of Net Zero, if he will implement the review's recommendation to publish a public engagement plan for England with clear metrics for successful engagement across different communities in the UK by the end of 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government published the results of Chris Skidmore's Net Zero Review on 13 January 2023 and thanks the chair for conducting this review. The Government will carefully consider the recommendations and respond to the review later in the year.

Conditions of Employment: Disability**Marion Fellows:**[\[R\] \[126700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill on workplace (a) rights and (b) adjustments for people with disabilities.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill and the powers within it are not intended to remove workers' rights and protections. The Bill is an enabling Act. The key measures, including the powers to preserve, revoke or replace, will provide UK (and devolved) ministers with the tools to review, amend or repeal their retained EU law in a way that is right for the UK and reflects the UK's new regulatory freedoms.

Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003**Stella Creasy:**[\[127759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether they plan to (a) revoke (b) retain or (c) replace the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: The Government is reviewing all REUL, including the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, to decide whether to repeal, replace or preserve it and will communicate more in due course.

■ **District Heating****Alison Thewliss:**[\[129844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to regulate communal heat networks; and whether his Department plans to introduce price caps for consumers on communal heat networks.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill, introduced to Parliament in June 2022, contains measures that will introduce consumer protection regulations for heat networks across the UK and will appoint Ofgem as the regulator in Great Britain, including communal networks.

Ofgem will have powers to introduce rules and/or guidance on fair and consistent pricing, take enforcement action against disproportionately high pricing, and the ability to set price comparison and benchmarking methodologies.

The Secretary of State will hold powers to introduce a price cap into the market, balancing out the benefits of a price cap with the risks inherent in a nascent market.

■ **Energy****Dan Carden:**[\[126780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report GreenGo: Unlocking an energy efficiency and clean heat revolution published by IPPR on 18 January 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The IPPR report makes interesting suggestions which are being considered alongside the recently published Skidmore review, to which the Government will be responding in due course.

■ **Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Food****Henry Smith:**[\[126596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether plant-based alternative foods are eligible for higher level support under the Energy Discount Scheme; and what standard industrial classification of economic activities code applies to this area of food production.

Graham Stuart:

Organisations that have a contract with a licensed energy supplier and are exposed to volatile energy prices will see a discount applied to their gas and electricity bill through the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme from April 2023.

Some sectors are particularly vulnerable to high energy prices due to their energy intensive nature and trade exposure. Organisations with primary operations in the list of eligible Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) sectors for the scheme, as published on gov.uk, will be eligible for a substantially higher level of support. If organisations are unsure of that code, they can find out online through Companies House, by using their company name or registration number. Further information is available from Companies House on SIC code classification.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128033/230104_ETII_List_for_gov.uk.pdf.

Henry Smith:

[126597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether plant-based foods are included under Standard industrial classification of economic activities code 10.89 manufacture of other food products n.e.c. under the Energy Discount Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

Organisations with primary operations in the list of eligible Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) sectors for the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, as published on gov.uk, will be eligible for the higher level of support through the scheme. If organisations are unsure of that code, they can find out online through Companies House, by using their company name or registration number. Further information is available from Companies House on SIC code classification:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128033/230104_ETII_List_for_gov.uk.pdf.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Mark Menzies:

[126600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of steps taken to help extend the Energy Bills Support Scheme to households without a direct relationship with their energy supplier.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding is being provided to around 900,000 households without a direct relationship with a domestic electricity supplier. This will be a payment of £400 per eligible household. The application will be open on or by Monday 27th February, with a dedicated customer helpline available to assist customers without online access. Further details will be published shortly.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Fraud

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[130116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to tackle scams related to the Energy Bills Discount Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government will be working closely with the Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) to manage the potential risks of fraud and gaming from the Energy Bill Discount Scheme. The Government is in the process of developing a robust set of fraud detection and prevention levers, which will support the delivery and implementation of the scheme.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[127780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the numbers of people who have successfully accessed support through the prepayment voucher scheme.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[127781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department are taking to increase the speed of issuing prepayment vouchers.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[127782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to help increase the uptake of support through the prepayment voucher scheme.

Graham Stuart:

In the first 3 months of the scheme energy suppliers issued 6,020,560 (99%) vouchers to customers with traditional prepayment meters, of which 4,261,940 (71%) have been redeemed by end December. This is an increase from 66% in the previous month.

The Government works with suppliers, consumer groups and charities to communicate the scheme and the importance of checking post, emails and text for the vouchers and taking action to redeem them.

Suppliers have an obligation to make a minimum of three attempts by at least two different methods to contact customers who have not redeemed their voucher.

Vouchers are valid for 90 days. Replacement vouchers can be issued but must be redeemed by the 30 June 2023.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Norfolk**James Wild:**[\[126840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of park home residents eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme-Alternative Fund in (a) North West Norfolk constituency and (b) Norfolk.

Graham Stuart:

The Department has made no such estimates for North West Norfolk constituency and Norfolk. However, it is estimated that over 130,000 residents of park homes, houseboats and caravans, who can provide proof of address, in England, Scotland and Wales, will be eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF). Overall, EBSS AF will provide support of £400 for energy bills for around 900,000 households that do not have a direct relationship with a domestic energy supplier, for example households with landlords that have a commercial energy contract, or those that are off-grid.

■ Energy Supply: Disability**Dan Carden:****[130060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with energy suppliers on (a) identifying and (b) supporting disabled customers.

Graham Stuart:

Ministers and officials meet regularly with suppliers to discuss a range of issues.

Independent regulator Ofgem requires energy suppliers to support disabled customers and the provision of additional services through a Priority Services Register. Ofgem monitors compliance with their rules protecting vulnerable consumers.

■ Energy: Licensing**Dan Carden:****[126779]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many times energy suppliers have been found to be in breach of their licensing conditions in each of the last three years; and what penalties were applied to those suppliers.

Graham Stuart:

As the independent regulator, Ofgem is responsible for ensuring licensed energy suppliers are complying with their licence conditions. Ofgem publishes details of its compliance and enforcement action on its website at: www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/compliance-and-enforcement.

■ Energy: Meters**Dan Carden:****[126781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Answer to the Question from the hon. Member for Eltham of 17 January 2023, Official Report, column 161, whether he plans to amend the (a) Gas Act 1986 and (b) Electricity Act 1989 to help tackle the practice of customers being forced onto prepayment meters.

Graham Stuart:

When installing a prepayment meter, suppliers have to consider whether this is safe and practicable, including whether a prepayment meter is appropriate for the specific customer. Ofgem rules restrict the force fitting a prepayment meter (PPM) to repay debt, except as a last resort. As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out in the House on 17th January, officials are working on measures to support PPM consumers.

Dan Carden:[\[126782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government is taking steps to ensure that customers on energy prepayment meters do not pay higher rates compared with those on direct debits.

Graham Stuart:

Supply licence conditions, enforced by the independent regulator Ofgem, state that differences in price between payment methods for energy must reflect the cost to the supplier of that payment method. The costs of managing prepayment meters are higher than those for standard meters due to the different metering requirements and payment systems.

Dan Carden:[\[127886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will take steps to help customers who have been subject to the forcible instillation of prepayment to have them removed at no cost.

Dan Carden:[\[127891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 124060 on Energy: Meters, if he will ask Ofgem to make an assessment of the level of compliance with current rules on forced prepayment meter installations; and if he will publish that assessment.

Graham Stuart:

On 22 January 2023, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy announced that the Government will take urgent action to bring about greater transparency when it comes to energy supplier practice, in relation to prepayment meters. The Government has announced a five-point plan to tackle concerning behaviour by energy suppliers which includes coordination with Ofgem to ensure it takes a more robust approach to the protection of vulnerable customers. Ofgem has since announced it will be conducting a further assessment of supplier prepayment meter practices.

Dan Carden:[\[127889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 124060 on Question for Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the minutes of his Department's meetings with (a) Ofgem and (b) energy suppliers on prepayment meters in the last six months.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set out his 5-point plan regarding prepayment meters and will continue to work with Ofgem and suppliers on this issue. The Department does not publish minutes of meetings with suppliers however Ministers will keep the House updated as this work progresses.

Dan Carden:**[127892]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether any energy suppliers have been sanctioned for breaching Ofgem's rules on the fitting of prepayment meters in the last three years.

Graham Stuart:

As the independent regulator, Ofgem is responsible for ensuring licensed energy suppliers are complying with their licence conditions. Ofgem publishes details of its compliance and enforcement action on its website at: www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/compliance-and-enforcement.

Dave Doogan:**[129990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether people that pay for their energy through their landlord using a coin meter will be eligible for Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding.

Graham Stuart:

If a landlord procures their energy via a commercial contract, the resident may be eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF). To receive this, the resident will need to submit a short online form via the Government's GOV.UK pages, with the application portal currently scheduled to open on or by 27th February. A dedicated helpline will be available for those applicants without online access. However, a landlord who has received the EBSS automatically via a domestic meter, must ensure that they are passing this support on in a just and reasonable way to the bill payer of the property.

Dan Carden:**[130010]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his recent letter to energy suppliers regarding prepayment meters, if he will publish a the data for (a) applications for court warrants to force entry into customers' homes and (b) remote switching of customers to prepay mode since July 2021 broken down by energy supplier.

Graham Stuart:

As part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State's 5-point plan on prepayment meters, he has written to energy suppliers asking that they share the number of warrants that they have applied for in recent months, and Ofgem has encouraged suppliers be fully transparent with their data around prepayment meter warrants.

In November 2022 Ofgem wrote to suppliers raising concern over remote switching of smart meters to prepayment mode without full regard to the licence conditions, and

Ofgem is working closely with consumer groups to monitor consumer outcomes in this area.

Dan Carden:

[\[130011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his recent letter to energy suppliers regarding prepayment meters, what legislative steps the Government will take to enforce the instruction for suppliers to end forced prepayment meter installations.

Graham Stuart:

Prepayment meters (PPMs) allow customers to pay for energy on a pay-as-you-go basis and serve an important function by helping the avoidance of debt and court action. A ban on PPM switching as a last resort could lead to an increase in bailiff action. There are no plans to remove this option.

Ofgem has stringent rules on the force-fitting of PPMs. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to Ofgem asking them to conduct a review to make sure suppliers are complying with those rules. The Secretary of State has also asked energy suppliers to commit voluntarily to stopping this practice. I met with OFGEM and suppliers this week to discuss this matter.

■ Energy: Prices

Dan Carden:

[\[126783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Autumn Statement published on 17 November 2022, when the Government will set out its position on introducing a social tariff for energy.

Dan Carden:

[\[126784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, whether his Department is holding a consultation with (a) local authorities, (b) civil society groups and (c) the wider public on energy reforms, including options such as a social tariff.

Graham Stuart:

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach to consumer protection, including options such as social tariffs, as part of wider retail market reforms. Discussions with stakeholders are ongoing.

The Government will set out its position when the assessment of the options is complete, in time to deliver a new approach from April 2024. No decision on whether or when to conduct a formal consultation has been made, but the Code of Practice on Consultation sets out the approach the Government will take when it has decided to conduct a consultation.

■ Energy: Temporary Accommodation

Stephen Farry: [113456]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that the provision of energy support is not hampered by out of date names in (a) temporary and (b) accommodation.

Graham Stuart:

For households in Northern Ireland that live in private rented accommodation, landlords are required to reflect in the price they charge for energy, the actual costs and any Government support they receive through Energy Bills Support Scheme Northern Ireland, and Energy Price Guarantee. This also applies to landlords with a commercial contract that may benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide support for energy bills for around 930,000 households in Great Britain and Northern Ireland without a domestic electricity supply. This is likely to include tenants in certain private and social rented homes. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vital-help-with-energy-bills-on-the-way-for-millions-more-homes-across-great-britain-and-northern-ireland>.

■ Fuel Poverty

Jonathan Ashworth: [129829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are at risk of falling into fuel poverty in the next 6 months.

Graham Stuart:

The latest official Fuel Poverty Statistics for England were published in February 2022 concerning 2020 data and projected estimates for 2021 and 2022, and can be found on gov.uk here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2020-statistics>.

Updated statistics of the number of households in fuel poverty for 2021 and projection estimates for 2022 and 2023 will be produced in the 2023 annual fuel poverty statistics.

■ Gas (Meters) Regulations 1983

Stella Creasy: [129811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Gas (Meters) Regulations 1983.

Graham Stuart:

The Gas (Meters) Regulations 1983 set out the limits of meter accuracy for gas meters approved under GB national legislation and prescribe the process for the re-examination of all disputed meters.

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

The Government will continue to ensure that only accurate gas meters are placed on the market in the United Kingdom and that market surveillance authorities have the necessary enforcement powers.

■ Hospices: Energy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[126717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that hospices have sufficient funding to cover energy costs.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible charities, including hospices, are protected from high energy costs over the winter period. Following an HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme, will run from April until March 2024 and will continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including hospices. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses, charities and other non-domestic customer over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Bill Esterson:

[\[R\] \[129769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will meet with trade union representatives to discuss developments in the UK steel industry.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

My most recent meeting with steel trade union representatives took place on 24 January with Roy Rickhuss CBE, General Secretary of Community Trade Union. BEIS officials and I continue to actively engage with trade unions, companies and wider to support the UK steel sector to develop a viable, long-term solution for the UK steel industry.

Bill Esterson:

[\[129771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120907, when the employment data for the steel sector for 2022 will be published.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Employment data is generated through the Business Register and Employment Survey, as made available through NOMIS (Official Census and Labour Market Statistics), a service provided by the Office for National Statistics.

According to the Release Calendar[1], the survey is due to be updated in September/October 2023.

[1]<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

■ Minimum Wage

Munira Wilson: [126830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason it is his policy that the national minimum wage for workers aged under 23 is lower than that for other workers.

Kevin Hollinrake:

For younger workers, the priorities in those first years are to secure work and gain experience which has always been reflected in the National Minimum Wage rate structure. The Government is committed to increasing the National Minimum Wage as much as possible without damaging employment prospects for younger workers. This is why on 1 April 2023, Government will increase the National Minimum Wage rates for workers under 18 by 9.7% to £5.28, 18-20 year olds by 9.7% to £7.49 and 21-23 year olds by 10.9% to £10.18. The Government is also committed to reducing the age threshold for the National Living Wage to 21 and over by 2024.

■ Natural Gas: Housing

Kenny MacAskill: [126824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department holds on the number of households not connected to the gas grid in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland a by (i) local authority and (ii) constituency.

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. Equivalent data is available at [Lower layer Super Output Area](#)(LSOA) and [Middle layer Super Output Area](#)(MSOA) levels, but not by constituency. For Northern Ireland, data on gas connections is available via the [Annual Retail Energy Market Monitoring Report](#).

■ New Businesses: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher: [129939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to encourage the creation of businesses in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) Coventry.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is encouraging the creation of businesses through the Start Up Loan scheme which has provided mentoring and financial support to 198 SMEs to the value of £1,920,907 and 504 SMEs to the value of 5,124,978 in Coventry North East and Coventry respectively.

We are also committed to supporting SMEs through exemption from new regulations where possible. This exemption was recently extended to businesses with up to 500 employees, potentially reducing red tape and bureaucracy for up to 40,000 more businesses.

We are also providing support through our network of 38 Growth Hubs and Business Support Helpline which provide access to information and advice on starting a business.

■ **Newport Wafer Fab**

Ruth Jones:

[\[126810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will meet with the hon. Member for Newport West to discuss the issues relating to the future of Newport Wafer Fab.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

My Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are always happy to meet colleagues to discuss important issues. If she would like to have a meeting, she is always welcome to reach out to our offices through the usual communication channels.

■ **North Sea Oil: Environment Protection**

Dan Carden:

[\[126786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the proposed Rosebank oil field on the protected seabed, the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt.

Graham Stuart:

The environmental impact of offshore oil and gas developments, including potential impacts on marine habitats such as the Faroe-Shetland Sponge Belt Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area, are subject to rigorous regulatory assessment by the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED), including consultation with government nature protection bodies and with the public.

The Environmental Statement for the Rosebank Field Development is currently being reviewed by OPRED and a decision will be published in due course.

■ **Nuclear Fusion**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[125514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to develop nuclear fusion technology.

George Freeman:

The Government published its Fusion Strategy in 2021, which describes how the UK will build on its fusion research leadership to commercialise fusion energy. The Government is investing over £700m into fusion research and innovation over three

years and boosting private sector innovation in fusion's technical challenges through a £42 million Fusion Industry Programme. In 2022 the Secretary of State for BEIS announced West Burton in Nottinghamshire as the site for STEP, the UK's prototype fusion power plant, to be built by 2040 and capable of putting electricity on the grid.

■ Nuclear Power: Carbon Emissions

John Spellar: [\[127693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential role of nuclear power in decarbonising the supply of electricity.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises the important role that nuclear has to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. This is reflected in the British Energy Security Strategy, published in April 2022, which sets out Government's ambition to deploy up to 24 Giga Watts of nuclear power by 2050.

The Department is considering the findings of the independent review of net zero, published on 13th January 2023, which reaffirmed many of the proposals set out in the British Energy Security Strategy for nuclear power.

■ Nuclear Power: Employment

John Spellar: [\[127694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the nuclear power industry in employment in the next five years.

Graham Stuart:

The Nuclear Skills Strategy Group (NSSG), which the Department is a member of, estimated that the UK nuclear workforce (which includes the workforce needed for Hinkley Point C and Sizewell C but no further new build projects) would be approximately seventy thousand in five years' time. This assessment is included in the Nuclear Workforce Assessment 2021. Officials will be working with the Group to update the Assessment later this year.

■ Nuclear Reactors

John Spellar: [\[127692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on the programme for Small Modular Nuclear Reactors.

Graham Stuart:

Small Modular Reactors could have an important role to play in the UK energy system in the transition to net zero by 2050 and in support of energy security.

The Government has awarded £210m to support development of the Rolls Royce Small Modular Reactor (SMR) design. The Rolls-Royce SMR entered the Generic

Design Assessment process in March becoming the first SMR to begin UK nuclear regulation.

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

John Spellar:

[127695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of global (a) demand and (b) supply of small modular nuclear reactors.

Graham Stuart:

Global SMR Demand

In 2014, The National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) estimated the size of the potential global Small Modular Reactor (SMR) market to be significant. This was calculated at approximately 65-85GW and valued at £250-£400bn by 2035. These findings were published as part of the [NNL Feasibility Study](#) on SMRs.

Global SMR Supply

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitors the global supply of advanced reactor systems. The IAEA's Advanced Reactor Information System identifies that there are more than 80 different advanced reactor designs under development in 18 countries.

■ **Post Offices: Energy**

Stephen Kinnock:

[127783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of higher energy prices on Post Offices.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises that postmasters – like many small business owners – may be facing challenging financial circumstances. That is why the Government introduced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which provides a discount on wholesale gas and electricity prices for all non-domestic consumers, including Post Offices. The scheme came into effect on 1 October 2022 and will end on 31 March 2023. On 9 January, the Government announced the Energy Bill Discount Scheme which will run for 12 months from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The new scheme will be available to everyone on a non-domestic contract and suppliers will automatically apply reductions to the bills of all eligible customers.

Stephen Kinnock:

[127784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help support Post Offices with increased energy costs.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[127785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of high energy prices on small and medium size businesses.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible businesses and other non-domestic customers, who receive their energy from licensed suppliers, including Post Offices, are protected from high energy costs over the winter period. Following a HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme, will run from April until March 2024, and will provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including Post Offices. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses, charities and other non-domestic customer over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion.

■ Private Rented Housing: Energy

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[128733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to respond to the consultation entitled Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes, published on 30 September 2020.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 25 January 2023]: The consultation on improving the energy performance of privately rented homes closed on 8th January 2021. The Government has analysed the responses received and is considering how best to ensure the cost relating to energy efficiency improvement is fair and proportionate to landlords and tenants. The Government will publish a response in due course.

■ Public Houses: Energy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the average increase in energy costs of pubs; and if he will make assessment of the potential merits of providing further support to pubs in the context of energy costs.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises these are difficult times for pubs and it will continue to provide support through the Energy Bill Discount Scheme once the Energy Bill Relief Scheme comes to an end on 31 March. The Government is also helping the industry, cutting business rates by 75% as well as a six-month extension to the alcohol duty freeze.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[127760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons publicly-funded research in research institutions such as the National Oceanography Centre is not fully funded by Government.

George Freeman:

The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) delivers world-class science and innovation working in close partnership with UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The NOC receives funding from NERC's non-competitive funding and the wider community to pursue science that is nationally and internationally important.

The NOC was part of NERC. From 1 November 2019, NOC operates as an independent research institute, a charitable company limited by guarantee. This new structure ensures that NOC is more agile, financially more resilient with more freedoms and flexibilities. Independent research institutes are funded to deliver their missions collaborating with a greater range of external partners including business and other funders.

■ Research: India

Chi Onwurah:

[\[125336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase and improve R&D collaborations with Indian (a) companies and (b) universities.

George Freeman:

BEIS is planning to host the next biennial UK-India Science and Innovation Council (SIC) in 2023. The SIC will ensure our relationship with India remains ambitious, strategic, outcome-focused and in line with the UK-India 2030 roadmap. It will also provide a platform to formally agree our shared research and innovation priorities and announce new joint programme activities creating links between our research and innovation communities; and celebrate the successes of our existing joint research and innovation programmes delivered through the Newton Bhabha Fund, which has had a transformational effect on our R&I relationship with India.

■ Semiconductors: Employment

Bill Esterson:

[\[129749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of UK jobs indirectly supported by high-tech sectors including the semiconductor industry.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

According to ONS figures[1], in 2021 high and medium-high technology manufacturing sectors directly accounted for around 796,000 jobs. This is based on

the OECD definition and covers the manufacture of pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronics (including semiconductors) and electrical equipment, machinery, and transport equipment[2].

In 2021 these industries supported in excess of 900,000 indirect jobs in other areas of manufacturing and the wider economy. This is likely an underestimate. A precise estimate is methodologically difficult as the ONS estimates indirect jobs for the individual sectors listed above and with an aggregate sector definition, such as high and medium tech manufacturing, double counting will arise where these sectors supply inputs to each other.

Within these figures, DCMS estimate there are ~24,000 people working directly across the UK semiconductor industry, which could imply in the region of 17,000 being indirectly supported elsewhere.

[1] ONS Employee jobs and ONS Self Employed Jobs.

[2] These are defined by the SIC codes 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30

■ Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Bill Esterson:

[\[129770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January to Question 125331 on Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Sefton Central, whether his Department plans to ask councils why they did not apply for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is working to understand the retrofit plans of the social housing sector. The Social Housing Retrofit Accelerator (SHRA) has been established alongside the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to guide social housing landlords in their retrofit planning and to support their engagement with the SHDF. The SHRA is funded directly by BEIS and as such is a free service for eligible applicants to the SHDF.

■ Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill

Dan Carden:

[\[126788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill on industrial relations.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department is currently finalising an impact assessment of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. This will be published shortly.

■ Supply Chains: Environment Protection and Human Rights

Dan Carden:

[\[127888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Business, Human Rights and Environment Bill to tackle (a) human rights abuses, (b) environmental destruction and (c) other harmful practices in supply chains.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government expects all businesses in the UK to respect human rights and the environment throughout their operations and supply relationships according to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises. The Modern Slavery Act already requires businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more, to set out the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. Financial penalties will be introduced through primary legislation, when parliamentary time allows, to increase compliance.

■ Swimming Pools: Energy

Mike Amesbury:

[\[127893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of excluding swimming pools from a support scheme for energy intensive businesses.

Graham Stuart:

During the review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, contributions from the private sector, trade associations, the voluntary sector and other types of organisations were assessed. These included leisure centres and swimming pools.

The Government has taken a consistent approach to identify the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for Energy and Trade Intensive Industries support. These thresholds have been set at sectors falling above the 80th percentile for energy intensity, and 60th percentile for trade intensity, plus any sectors eligible for the existing energy compensation and exemption schemes.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[127894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will review the decision to exclude swimming pools from high energy business support schemes.

Graham Stuart:

There are currently no plans to review the list of Energy and Trade Intensive Industries eligible for support under the Energy Bill Discount Scheme. The Government has taken a consistent approach to identify the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for Energy and Trade Intensive Industries support. These thresholds

have been set at sectors falling above the 80th percentile for energy intensity, and 60th percentile for trade intensity, plus any sectors eligible for the existing energy compensation and exemption schemes.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Energy

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[128711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support voluntary and faith groups with increased energy bills during the cost of living crisis.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible non-domestic customers, including voluntary and faith groups, who receive their energy from licensed suppliers, are protected from high energy costs over the winter period. Following an HMT led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will run from April until March 2024, and continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting non-domestic customers over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion.

■ Wind Power: Cornwall

Darren Jones:

[\[127878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what social value criteria the Department has set in the next auction for offshore wind projects in the Cornish Sea; and what assessment his Department has made of potential direct financial or other benefits that may be delivered locally in respect of those projects.

Graham Stuart:

The parameters of the upcoming floating offshore wind seabed leasing process in the Celtic Sea are a matter for The Crown Estate, who have stated developers will be expected to provide a plan of their early investment in support of an internationally competitive supply chain.

Offshore wind is an important growth industry for the UK. The Government estimates the ambition of 50GW of offshore wind outlined in the British Energy Security Strategy, including up to 5GW of innovative floating offshore wind, could support an estimated 90,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2030

■ Wines: Sales

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[127841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department on reviewing rules on the sale of pint sized bottles of English sparkling wine.

Kevin Hollinrake:

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

CABINET OFFICE■ **Boris Johnson: Ukraine****Dan Jarvis:**[\[129843\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department provided support to the Rt Hon Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip for his visit to Ukraine in January 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to PQ 129842.

■ **Cabinet Office: Minimum Wage****Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[129888\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Chris Stephens:[\[R\] \[129906\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of employees in the Prime Minister's Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office ensures that we are compliant with legislative increases to the National Minimum Wage. Our minimum salary (AO at a National Pay band) works out to £11.25 per hour.

For management and staffing purposes, the Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office. All employees in the Cabinet Office are paid above the National Minimum Wage.

■ **Concession Contracts Regulations 2016****Stella Creasy:**[\[129810\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Concession Contracts Regulations 2016.

Alex Burghart:

The Concessions Contracts Regulations 2016 (along with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016 and the Defence and Security Public Contracts Regulations 2011) will be replaced by the new public procurement

regime being put in place by the Procurement Bill, currently being debated in Parliament.

■ Covid-19 Inquiry

Steve Reed: [\[98786\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister plans to meet with the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice to discuss appointing panel members to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Alex Burghart:

[Holding answer 2 December 2022]: Appointments to an inquiry panel are made in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Inquiries Act 2005 and in consultation with the chair. Any representations on the composition of the panel will be duly considered by the Government. Moreover, the inquiry's terms of reference require it to "listen to and consider carefully the experiences of bereaved families and others who have suffered hardship or loss as a result of the pandemic".

■ Government Departments: Languages

Catherine West: [\[129915\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 122197 on Cabinet Office: Mandarin Language, if he will make it his policy to introduce a record of the foreign language proficiency of officials in (a) his Department and (b) all Departments.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office has no current plans to introduce a policy to record foreign language proficiency. Whilst we hope to make use of a future cross-Government skills platform, we do not currently have the functionality in our department to centrally record these skills. However, Government Business Service work to deliver a cross-Government skills platform has started and we would expect to capture this type of information centrally at a future date.

CSHR has no current plans to introduce a cross-department policy to record foreign language proficiency.

■ Government Departments: McKinsey and Company

Darren Jones: [\[126765\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the number and value of each Government contract with McKinsey consultancy valued above £50,000 in each of the past five financial years.

Alex Burghart:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000, and £25,000 in the wider public sector, are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>.

■ Members' Interests and Peers' Interests: Energy and Utilities

Ian Byrne:

[\[130072\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to require for MPs and Peers to declare (a) membership of the boards of energy and utility companies and (b) dividends received from energy and utility companies.

Jeremy Quin:

Existing disclosure rules pertain but this is a matter determined by each House of Parliament, not Government.

■ Ministry of Justice: Written Questions

Steve Reed:

[\[126667\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to provide an Answer to Question 98786 tabled by the hon. Member for Croydon North on 29 November 2022.

Alex Burghart:

A response to the hon. Member's question of 29 November 2022 was deposited in the House Libraries on 14 December 2022. However, due to an administrative error this was not sent to the hon. Member and the response to Question 98786 was not updated on the Parliament website.

I would like to apologise to the hon. Member for this error and assure him that it has been addressed and a copy of this response has been submitted to Parliament. Cabinet Office officials are also reviewing practices to ensure this type of administrative error does not happen again.

■ Richard Sharp

Dan Carden:

[\[130009\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish any correspondence between his Department and the former Prime Minister on the appointment of Richard Sharp as BBC Chairman.

Jeremy Quin:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments has stated his intention to review this competition to ensure the process was run in compliance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments. The Government will be happy to assist him to show how the correct processes were followed, and provide access to any necessary papers. The Commissioner will publish a public report in due course. The Government does not otherwise propose to pre-empt that formal review.

DEFENCE■ **Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations****James Wild:**[\[126839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much was spent on (a) Operation Northmoor and (b) Cestro.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

£10 million was spent on Operation NORTHMOOR, which was the Royal Military Police's investigation into 675 allegations from Afghanistan (these allegations ranged from non-criminal allegations (of cultural insensitivity), to assault and ill-treatment, to unlawful killings during arrest operations).

Unlike Operation NORTHMOOR, Operation CESTRO was not budgeted separately from other Special Investigation Branch (SIB) Regiment RMP investigations. It is not therefore possible to extract costs data specific to that operation.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Procurement****John Healey:**[\[128602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department last paid General Dynamics Land Systems UK as part of the Armoured Cavalry Programme.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence last paid General Dynamics Land Systems UK as part of the Armoured Cavalry Programme in December 2020.

■ **Armed Forces (Court Martial) Rules 2009****Stella Creasy:**[\[128638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, what plans he has to (a) retain (b) revoke or (c) replace the Armed Forces (Court Martial Rules) 2009

Stella Creasy:[\[129807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether they plan to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Court Martial Appeal Court Rules 2009.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We are committed to supporting fully those victims of crime who are going through the Service Justice System. The current Armed Forces (Court Martial Rules) 2009 and Court Martial Appeal Court Rules 2009 implemented some elements of EU law and these will be retained. The legislative basis for these parts of the Court Martial Rules will be changed so that they form part of UK, rather than European Union, law.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Luke Pollard:

[\[128717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much he plans to invest in housing for personnel based at Robertson Barracks in Norfolk in each year until its closure.

Alex Chalk:

Works to upgrade Service Family Accommodation at Robertson Barracks, Norfolk, have been undertaken in previous years; with no further works currently planned.

The table below provides details of the works currently planned to Single Living Accommodation (SLA) at Robertson Barracks in each year until its closure. This may be subject to change.

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	VALUE	VALUE	VALUE	VALUE	VALUE	VALUE
ESTABLISHMENT	£MILLION	£MILLION	£MILLION	£MILLION	£MILLION	£MILLION
Robertson Barracks	0.409		0.200	0.400		0.282

■ Armed Forces: Sexual Offences

Sarah Atherton:

[\[130086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of people discharged from the armed forces with personality disorders had previously made (a) formal or (b) informal allegations of sexual assault in each of the last five years; and to breakdown that proportion by gender.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

This information is not held. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not routinely record a Veteran's discharge reason to this level of detail.

■ Challenger Tanks

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[127709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse is of using, deploying and supporting a Challenger 2, based on the platform travelling 100 miles a day and firing on average 40 rounds per day, including manpower, equipment and consumables.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[127710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse is to sustain a Challenger 2 squadron, based on 14 platforms, for (a) seven days, (b) 28 days, (c) 90 days and (d) six months.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[127711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost to the public purse is of an AS-90, based on the platform travelling 30 miles per day and firing 90 rounds per day.

Alex Chalk:

The Department carefully considers the cost of using, deploying and sustaining platforms, including those granted to Ukraine. The costs associated with the specific metrics requested by the right hon. Member would however be subject to many variables and include commercially sensitive information. I am therefore unable to provide an assured figure.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[128613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what are the forecasted Whole Life Costs, including the Total Departmental Expenditure, Capital Departmental Expenditure and Resource Departmental Expenditure, for the Challenger 3 upgrade programme.

Alex Chalk:

We do not routinely release forecast figures regarding the resource and capital expenditure of our major projects. Portfolio data is published annually in support of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Annual Report which includes a budget baseline and the latest HM Treasury approved estimates in respect of whole life costs.

The current report is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2022>

■ Independent Inquiry into Alleged Unlawful Activity by British Armed Forces during Deliberate Detention Operations in Afghanistan

James Wild:

[126837]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will fund independent legal representation for any serving or former members of the armed forces who are required to give evidence to the Independent inquiry into alleged unlawful activity by British armed forces during deliberate detention operations in Afghanistan chaired by Lord Justice Sir Charles Haddon-Cave.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

All current and former service and civilian personnel who are subject to legal proceedings as a consequence of their actions during service or employment, or who may give evidence in legal proceedings in connection with their official duties, are entitled to legal representation.

An individual acting in accordance with their employment or service will generally be offered representation by Government Legal Department (GLD) in England and Wales; Morton Fraser (MF) in Scotland; and the Crown Solicitor (CSO) in Northern Ireland.

Circumstances where the fees of other solicitors may be agreed will generally only include where there is a potential conflict of interest with the Department, or where GLD/MF/CSO do not have appropriate expertise or capacity to provide representation.

James Wild:

[\[126838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what lessons he learned from the findings of Sir Thayne Forbes in the Al Sweady Inquiry for setting the terms of reference of the independent inquiry into alleged unlawful activity by British Armed Forces during deliberate detention operations in Afghanistan.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Secretary of State for Defence engaged with Lord Justice Sir Charles Haddon-Cave, the inquiry chair, throughout the process of setting the terms of reference for the *Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan (IIA)*.

As part of this process, Sir Charles and the Secretary of State considered comparable inquiries into historical allegations, including the Al-Sweady Inquiry, with regard to the IIA's terms of reference, resourcing requirements and anticipated costs.

■ Military Bases: Heating

John Healey:

[\[126539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 January 2023 to Question 113208 on Military Bases: Heating, how many and what proportion of these incidents were classed as (a) emergency, (b) urgent and (c) routine.

Alex Chalk:

The table below details how the incidents, relating to heating, were categorised.

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
Emergency (E)	129
Enhanced Reactive Maintenance (ERM)	759
1 – Critical	69
2 – Urgent	279
3 - Routine	70
Catastrophic Failure Out of Hours (CF)	31
Total	1,337

The data for Stonehouse Barracks provided previously in Question 113208 was incorrectly reported at 349 incidents, instead of 46, due to a data error. The table now reflects the correct lesser number of total incidents at 1,337 as opposed to 1,640.

■ Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave

Luke Pollard: [\[129995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave, how much of his Department's budget has been allocated to the Annual Leave Payment Scheme for Financial Year 2022-23.

Luke Pollard: [\[130081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Armed Forces: annual leave, what the estimated cost to the public purse of the Annual Leave Payment Scheme is.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

In accordance with international accounting standards, the Department holds £70 million of accruals for untaken leave carried forward by civil servants in prior years. Funding for the Annual Leave Payment Scheme will be drawn from this figure, the amount of which will be dependent on overall uptake which we are currently measuring.

Luke Pollard: [\[130078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave, what estimate his Department has made of the number of its civil servants expected to use the Annual Leave Payment scheme.

Luke Pollard: [\[130079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Armed Forces: annual leave, why the Annual Leave Payment Scheme is only a one-year scheme.

Luke Pollard: [\[130082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Armed Forces: annual leave, what the exceptional reason given for agreeing the Annual Leave Payment Scheme is.

Luke Pollard: [\[130083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave, whether the Annual Leave Payment scheme policy has different provisions for different (a) parts of the United Kingdom and (b) civil service grades.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

In December 2022, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) announced a new Annual Leave Payment Scheme. Under the terms of the Scheme, it has been exceptionally agreed that MOD civil servants with unused annual leave balances, after taking adequate rest and recuperation (statutory annual leave; 20 days annual leave plus Public

Holidays (pro-rata for non-standard workers)), can submit a single request for the MOD to buy back up to a maximum of five contractual days annual leave (pro-rata for non-standard workers). This buy back facility is a one-off scheme which is available from 14 December 2022 until 28 February 2023. Other Government Departments already offer the ability to buy and sell leave.

Precise data was obtained regarding annual leave remaining and projected carry-over. Prior to the commencement of the scheme, data analysis in mid-November 2022 indicated that 57 per cent of the MOD civilian workforce had half or more of their leave entitlement remaining, which indicated a potential high demand. As of 24 January 2023, approximately 2,620 applications had been approved for payment since the start of scheme and will be paid at the end of January.

The Annual Leave Payment Scheme for MOD civilians was put in place as a one-off measure for the current financial year as a cost of living and leave reduction initiative. Many staff members carried over additional leave during the COVID pandemic. The scheme was a way to lower these numbers whilst offering remuneration for those interested in selling. When the scheme was agreed 23,591 staff-members had carried-over more than ten days annual leave into the current leave year.

The Annual Leave Payment Scheme does not have different provisions for different parts of the United Kingdom. Applications from lower grades are prioritised.

Luke Pollard:

[130080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2023 to Question 122497 on Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave, how many annual leave days were unused in his Department in the each of the last five years.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is taking time to collate the required information to answer the hon. Members Question. I will write to him when the information is available, and a copy of this letter will be placed in the Library of The House.

■ Ministry of Defence: Trade Unions

Chris Stephens:

[R] [127799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

A range of HR information is published on GOV.UK which is publicly available. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) which stipulate some categories of information that the Department will share with the Trade Unions for the purposes of collective bargaining. These include paybill, financial, efficiency and staffing information. In addition, the MOD regularly shares a range of Human Resources (HR) information about matters that impact upon the civilian workforce, including workforce planning; equality and diversity; health and safety; HR

policy development; pay and allowances; restructuring; redeployment and redundancies, and outsourcing.

■ National Security: Cybersecurity

John Healey: [\[129725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2023 to Question 120871 on National Security: Cybersecurity, whether the six Programme Directors since 2016 left their positions voluntarily.

Alex Chalk:

All Ministry of Defence Programme Directors left the position voluntarily.

John Healey: [\[129726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2023 to Question 120862, how many and what increments have been delivered by the Joint Crypt Key Programme.

John Healey: [\[129727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2023 to Question 120862, how many annual capability delivery milestones did the Joint Crypt Key Programme meet in each year since 2016.

Alex Chalk:

Incremental delivery by the Joint Crypt Key programme is tracked through the achievement of capability milestones. The following number of capability delivery milestones were delivered in the last four financial years (FY).

FY2019-20	FY2020-21	FY2021-22	FY2022-23
1	1	11	3

Comparable information on previous years is not held centrally.

I would be happy to offer the right hon. Member a briefing at a higher classification.

John Healey: [\[129728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 January 2023 to Question 122045 on National Security: Cybersecurity, how much of the whole life cost of the Joint Crypt Key Programme will be funded by (a) his Department and (b) the National Cyber Security Centre.

Alex Chalk:

As a Ministry of Defence-sponsored programme, the Joint Crypt Key Programme is almost entirely funded by the Ministry of Defence. Less than one per cent of programme whole-life costs are drawn from other Departments.

■ Topaz Marine: Contracts

Ian Mearns:

[\[128622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date his Department opened formal negotiations with Topaz Marine over the purchase of MV Topaz Tangaroa; and if he will list the other vessels considered for carrying out the subsea security function.

Alex Chalk:

Extensive market engagement and analysis was conducted to determine the suitability of available vessels to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Defence. It was concluded that the MV Topaz Tangaroa was the only ship capable of fully meeting those requirements. Following this determination, an invitation to negotiate was issued to the owner of the MV Topaz Tangaroa on 5 August 2022. I am unable to provide details of the other vessels considered as to do so could be prejudicial to the commercial interests of third parties.

■ Type 32 Frigates

Chris Evans:

[\[126612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact on the economy of cancellation of the Type 32 frigate programme.

Chris Evans:

[\[126613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on the Type 32 frigate programme.

Chris Evans:

[\[126614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact on the Scottish economy of cancellation of the Type 32 frigate programme.

Alex Chalk:

There are currently no plans to withdraw the Type 32 Frigate Programme and it remains a key part of the future fleet for the Royal Navy. The Programme is currently in its concept phase and work continues, across a number of defence organisations, to ensure the programme is affordable.

Defence Equipment and Support (DES) have been allocated overall funding to develop various concepts on multiple projects. It is therefore difficult to delineate precise costs, but we would estimate that approximately c.£4 million of this funding has been allocated to the T32 programme.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **BBC: Local Broadcasting****James Wild:**[\[127915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the BBC's revised proposals for local radio services in England on (a) listeners and (b) BBC employees.

Julia Lopez:

The Government recognises the strength of feeling about the importance of BBC Local Radio. These services help bring communities together, and play a vital role in delivering news, sports coverage and other content that is locally relevant.

While it is up to the BBC to decide how it delivers its services, the Government is clear that the BBC must make sure it continues to provide distinctive and genuinely local radio services, with content that reflects and represents people and communities from all corners of the UK.

The Government remains disappointed that the BBC is planning to reduce parts of its local radio output, and Ministers expressed their concerns to the Chairman of the BBC Board and the Director General when they met towards the end of last year.

The Government understands that the BBC have made a recent announcement adjusting their previous proposal, and we will seek to understand what this means in practice for its audiences.

The Government expects Ofcom to ensure the BBC is robustly held to account in delivering its public service duties.

■ **Broadband: Tatton****Esther McVey:**[\[903268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of progress on the rollout of superfast broadband in Tatton constituency.

Julia Lopez:

Over 95 per cent of premises in the constituency of Tatton are already able to access a superfast connection. Further non-superfast premises are gaining access to gigabit-capable connections through continued delivery under the Connecting Cheshire programme.

Later this year we will launch a Project Gigabit procurement in Cheshire, covering an estimated 74,000 premises, including those that still do not have access to superfast broadband.

More immediate support for premises in rural areas is also available through our Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

■ Copyright: Artificial Intelligence

John Spellar:

[\[903264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to review support for the creative industries in the context of the proposed text and data mining copyright exception for artificial intelligence.

Julia Lopez:

The Government has heard a range of reactions to the text and data mining (TDM) proposal, including concerns raised by rights holders. The Minister for Intellectual Property welcomed the additional evidence and the Government has now launched a period of stakeholder engagement on implementation options, taking into account the evidence received.

We are confident that together we can design a balanced approach which supports the Government's ambitions on AI innovation without critically undermining value for rights holders. In parallel, we are also working with industry to develop the Creative Industries Sector Vision to set out our ambitions for the sector. We will publish this in the coming months.

■ Dormant Assets Scheme

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[129720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to maintain funding for financial inclusion through the Dormant Assets Scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart Andrew:

At present, the government is considering over 3,300 responses to the public consultation on what the broad social and/or environmental purposes of the English portion of dormant assets should be going forwards.

The government plans to publish a response in early 2023 setting out these future purposes of the English portion.

Until this response has been published, I am afraid that I cannot commit to a government position on financial inclusion.

■ Football

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[903266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to help ensure the English Football League and football club owners are accountable to fans.

Stuart Andrew:

We recognise the need for football to be reformed to ensure the game's long term sustainability. In April 2022, the government responded to the Fan Led Review of Football governance and confirmed support for greater fan engagement.

One of my first meetings as Minister for Sport was with the Football Supporters' Association to hear their concerns. We will publish a White Paper setting out our detailed response to the Fan Led Review of Football Governance in the next few weeks.

■ Football Governance Fan-led Review

Valerie Vaz: [\[129795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government will give a new independent regulator for football the necessary powers to ensure fair distributions from the Premier League to the rest of the clubs in line with the recommendations of the Fan Led Review.

Valerie Vaz: [\[129796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to secure a sustainable future for clubs in the English Football League.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government published its response to the recommendations made by the Independent Fan-Led Review of Football Governance in April 2022. The Government recognises the need for the long-term financial sustainability of football clubs, throughout the football pyramid.

The Government will publish a White Paper on Football Governance reforms imminently, to set out our detailed plans to improve the financial stability and governance of football clubs across all leagues. The Government remains clear that the preferred outcome on financial distributions is a football led solution. The football authorities can take forward some of the reforms needed now, and we continue to work with industry to push toward this.

■ Football: Females

Julie Elliott: [\[128642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has for the regulation of women's football.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government published its response to the recommendations made by the independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance in April. We absolutely recognise the need for football to be reformed to ensure the game's sustainability in the long term. We remain committed to publishing a White Paper setting out our proposals for the reform of football governance and will do so imminently.

On women's football we have considered the findings of the Fan Led Review. The Review of Women's Football is still gathering evidence and we do not want to preempt the findings of that Review, which will be published in due course.

■ Football: Reform

Ben Bradley:

[129993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to ensure that the White Paper on football reform (a) supports English Football League clubs and (b) protects the Premier League.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government will publish a White Paper on Football Governance reforms imminently. The White Paper will set out how football should be reformed to improve the financial stability and governance of football clubs. This will balance allowing the game to thrive and remain a global success story, while effectively tackling harms where they exist.

■ Leisure: Finance

Lucy Powell:

[129790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how funding his Department allocated to sport and recreation facilities in each year for which records are available.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key Government priority. We recognise that taking part in sport brings communities together and contributes to making people both happier and healthier.

The majority of funding to grassroots sports projects is delivered through our Arms Length Body, Sport England. Last year, Sport England received almost £350 million from the Exchequer and National Lottery.

The Government also invests £18 million a year into community sport facilities via the Football Foundation, alongside the English Football Association and the Premier League. We have committed an additional £230 million UK-wide between 2021 and 2025 to increase participation, particularly for under-represented groups including women and girls and disabled players.

Sport England's most recent annual report and set of accounts can be found here- <https://www.sportengland.org/corporate-information/annual-report>.

■ Museums and Galleries

Dr Matthew Offord:

[126607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate her Department has made of the number of objects in museum collections deaccessioned in the last five years.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government does not keep such records as museums and galleries in the UK operate independently of the Government. Decisions relating to the care and management of their collections are a matter for the trustees of each museum.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[126608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what museums are prevented by statute from deaccessioning objects in their collections; and whether she plans to extend those statutes to other institutions.

Stuart Andrew:

Some national museums are prevented by law from 'deaccessioning' objects in their collections unless, broadly, they are duplicates or unfit for retention. The two exceptions to this are human remains (less than 1,000 years old) and Nazi-era spoliation.

The Acts governing the national museums which have provisions prohibiting the trustees of the museums from disposing of items in their collection are listed below. The provisions are explicit and specific, setting out limited scenarios where disposal would be permitted. The Government has no plans to change these Acts.

GOVERNING LEGISLATION	ORGANISATION
British Museum Act 1963	British Museum National History Museum
British Library Act 1972	British Library
National Heritage Act 1983	Victoria and Albert Museum Science Museum Royal Armouries Kew Gardens
Merseyside Museums and Galleries Order 1986	National Museums Liverpool
Museums and Galleries Act 1992	Tate National Portrait Gallery National Gallery Wallace Collection
Imperial War Museum Act 1920	Imperial War Museum
National Maritime Museum Act 1934	Royal Museum Greenwich (National Maritime Museum)

■ **Parthenon Sculptures****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[126609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has had discussions with John Lefas on the Parthenon Sculptures in the last two years.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[126610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions her Department has had with external parties on the Parthenon Sculptures in the last two years.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[126611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will place in the Library of the House correspondence between the Department and the British Museum on the Parthenon Sculptures in the last two years.

Stuart Andrew:

The Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum are legally owned by the Trustees of the British Museum, which is operationally independent of Government. Decisions relating to the care and management of the museum's collections are a matter for the Trustees of the British Museum.

The British Museum is prohibited by law from deaccessioning items from its collection, and we have no plans to change the law.

The only discussions the Department has had on the matter of the Parthenon Sculptures occur within the formal meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property at UNESCO – the last one being attended by Government officials in May 2022.

The Department does not hold discussions on this matter with external parties, including with John Lefas, and consequently does not have additional material to place in the Library of the House.

■ Recording Studios: Finance

Kevin Brennan:

[\[903265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the financial viability of recording studios.

Julia Lopez:

In August 2021, DCMS commissioned the consultancy firm, Sound Diplomacy, to assess the state of the music studio market in England.

Evidence found challenges, but showed the market is responding to changes, such as technological innovation, and is maintaining or growing sources of income.

As a result, the report found the music studio market was not in need of specific government intervention.

Since then, the Government announced a new Energy Bills Discount Scheme to help support businesses, like recording studios, to tackle rising energy costs.

■ Television

Peter Gibson: [\[903267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure the continuity of terrestrial television coverage.

Julia Lopez:

The Government remains committed to the future of digital terrestrial television, which we expect will continue to be an important way of watching for years to come.

That is why we have already legislated domestically to ensure terrestrial television broadcasting can continue until at least 2034, and will continue to make the case in international fora too.

■ Three: Vodafone

Lucy Powell: [\[129791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of a potential merger between Three and Vodafone on (a) prices and (b) consumer choice.

Julia Lopez:

In October 2022, Vodafone and Three announced that they were in talks to merge their UK businesses.

It is the statutory responsibility of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to review mergers under the Enterprise Act 2002 with input from relevant sector regulators, in this case, it would be Ofcom. The Government has no role in the merger review or decision.

On 10 January 2023, I met Ofcom Chairman Lord Grade and one of the topics discussed was Ofcom's view on the number of mobile operators in the market.

Lucy Powell: [\[129792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of a potential merger between Three and Vodafone on staff of those companies.

Lucy Powell: [\[129793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with Ofcom on the impact of a potential merger between Three and Vodafone on regulation in the telecoms market.

Julia Lopez:

In October 2022, Vodafone and Three announced that they were in talks to merge their UK businesses.

It is the statutory responsibility of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to review mergers under the Enterprise Act 2002 with input from relevant sector

regulators, in this case, it would be Ofcom. The Government has no role in the merger review or decision.

On 10 January 2023, I met Ofcom Chairman Lord Grade and one of the topics discussed was Ofcom's view on the number of mobile operators in the market.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Munira Wilson:

[126831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential impact of changes to the level of the national minimum wage on the number of people from lower-income backgrounds who start apprenticeships.

Robert Halfon:

The independent Low Pay Commission is responsible for advising the government on annual changes to the minimum pay rates. Its recommendations follow a period of extensive research and consultation with employers, sector representative bodies and government stakeholders.

In November 2022, the government accepted in full, the commission's recommendation to increase the Apprentice National Minimum Wage by 9.7% from April 2023. This means that an apprentice will be entitled to a minimum wage of at least £5.28 per hour in the first year of their apprenticeship. Most employers pay their apprentices more than the minimum. Latest data shows that the median gross hourly pay for apprentices in 2021 was £9.98 per hour.

In its summary of evidence for 2022, the Low Pay Commission found that there is little evidence that recent rises to National Minimum and Living Wage rates have harmed employment, or that aligning the Apprentice National Minimum Wage Rate with the Under 18 National Minimum Wage in 2022 has adversely impacted apprenticeship starts. The department will of course continue to monitor the impact that any rise in the Apprentice Minimum Wage has on apprenticeship starts over the coming year, and will share intelligence across government and with the Low Pay Commission as necessary.

The department remains committed to ensuring that apprentice pay supports the attraction and retention of talented individuals into apprenticeships, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is right that apprentices receive a wage which is fair and commensurate with the value and skills that they bring to their workplaces.

■ Apprentices: Degrees

Jim Shannon:

[\[125357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to increase uptake of degree apprenticeships among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Robert Halfon:

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

The department wants more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to benefit from apprenticeships at all levels, and is working to expand degree apprenticeships, ensuring these opportunities are accessible to young people. We are making up to £8 million available in the 2022/23 financial year to Higher Education (HE) institutions through the Strategic Priorities Grant to enable them to expand provision and form new employer partnerships.

Our 'Get the Jump' skills for life campaign is raising awareness and understanding of all the different education and training pathways for young people aged 14-19. The campaign will help to raise awareness of T-levels, apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications, so young people can make more informed decisions about their future.

The department continues to increase outreach to students of all backgrounds through the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme. The ASK programme provides schools and further education colleges across England with a free bespoke package of comprehensive information and support about apprenticeships, ensuring that students of all backgrounds are aware of the benefits of apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships.

The department works with employers to showcase higher and degree apprenticeship vacancies on GOV.UK. The listing published in November featured over 300 vacancies across the country from over 60 employers. These vacancies are promoted in schools and colleges through the ASK programme.

The department is working with the Office for Students to improve access to and participation in HE. We are also working with UCAS to establish the needs of young people, the people who influence their career decisions, and employers to determine how our respective systems and services can be improved so that more young people consider and secure apprenticeships.

■ Childcare

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[129945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure childcare is (a) accessible and (b) affordable for parents in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

Claire Coutinho:

The department remains committed to improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare, and we are continuing to look at ways to make childcare more affordable and flexible for parents. In England, we have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on our early education entitlements to support families with the cost of childcare. This government-funded childcare support has benefited thousands of parents.

In July 2022, the department announced measures to increase the take-up of childcare support to ensure that families can access government support to save money on their childcare bills. This included our Childcare Choices communications campaign to ensure every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for. This information is available here:

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk>.

The department continues to engage with sector stakeholders and local authorities to monitor dynamics within local markets, parents' access to the government's entitlements, the childcare they require and the sustainability of the sector. We also continue to monitor the sufficiency of childcare. The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children. Ofsted data currently shows that the number of places offered by providers on the Early Years Register has remained broadly stable at 1.3 million places since August 2015.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England and if a local authority raises concerns about sufficiency issues, we will support them with any specific requirements. At present, most local authorities, including Coventry City Council, which contains the constituency of Coventry North East, report that they are fulfilling their duty to ensure sufficient childcare. This is also the case in the West Midlands area.

■ Education: Finance**Jim Shannon:****[126643]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that education is adequately funded.

Nick Gibb:

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

The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools' budget of £2.3 billion for both 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

Taking the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the additional funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement together, core schools funding is increasing by £3.5 billion in the 2023/24 financial year, compared to 2022/23. This

takes the total core schools budget for 2023/24 to £57.3 billion. The core schools budget will total £58.8 billion in 2024/25.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has said that this additional funding will fully cover expected increases in school costs up to 2024, and will take spending per pupil back to at least 2010 levels in real terms. That means the 2024/25 core school budget will be the highest ever level of spending on schools in real terms per pupil.

The Department continues to monitor the financial health of schools closely.

■ Office for Students

Matt Western:

[\[125445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase the registration fee universities are required to pay to the Office for Students.

Robert Halfon:

Under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the department sets the Office for Student's (OfS) registration fees, which are paid by registered higher education (HE) providers.

No final decision has been made on any fee increase. The department is currently considering the level those fees should be set at for the 2023/24 academic year, to ensure that the OfS can perform its important functions effectively, ensuring students receive high quality education and value for money.

This includes continuing investigations to address pockets of low quality HE provision and deliver new duties under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.

■ Out-of-School Education

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[129754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of Ofsted's powers to enforce existing legislation on unregistered schools.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[129755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve Ofsted's ability to investigate unregistered schools.

Nick Gibb:

It is a criminal offence, under Section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution which is not registered with the Department. Under Section 97 of the 2008 Act, Ofsted may inspect, without notice, any establishment suspected of operating as an unregistered independent school.

Those found to be running unregistered independent schools can face prosecution. The existing powers in the Education and Skills Act 2008 have led to six successful prosecutions of those responsible for these settings since 2016. Over 130 establishments have been issued with warning notices over the same period

following an inspection. Most establishments have closed or changed their operation to comply with legislation.

■ Pre-school Education: East of England

Rachel Hopkins:

[126889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association entitled Levelling Up in the East of England: the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions, published on 13 December 2022, if she will take steps to implement the recommendations on (a) improving and (b) extending (i) early years (A) support, (B) education and (C) special educational needs.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is committed to ensuring that every child in an early years setting, regardless of their background, where they live, or any additional needs they may have, receives high quality education and care. In 2021, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework was reformed. The EYFS framework sets the standards and requirements that all early years providers must follow, to ensure that every child has the best start in life and is prepared for school. The reforms aim to improve outcomes for all children, particularly disadvantaged children, and to reduce the amount of paperwork so that practitioners and teachers can spend more time supporting children through rich curriculum activities.

The department has built up a significant early education and childcare offer to parents. In 2010, to support children to develop social skills and prepare them for school, the government extended free early education and care for all three and four-year-olds, regardless of parental income or working status, from 12.5 hours a week to 15 hours a week.

In 2013, the department introduced 15 hours of free early education and care for disadvantaged two year-olds, which aims to support improved educational outcomes for the most disadvantaged children, who are the least likely to take up formal childcare, but who stand to benefit from it the most.

In 2017, the department introduced an additional 15 hours, providing a total of 30 hours of free early education and care for working parents of three and four-year-olds, if they earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum or living wage and under £100,000 per year. This can help save working parents up to £6,000 a child per year.

Getting this right is fundamentally important for parents and children, and the department continues to look at all options to improve the cost, flexibility and availability of childcare, and crucially, outcomes for children.

The department is providing a package of training, qualifications, expert guidance and targeted support for the early years sector, to support learning and recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the youngest and most disadvantaged children. This includes funding training of up to 5,000 early years Special Educational

Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) resulting in an accredited Level 3 Early Years SENCO qualification. The Level 3 Early Years SENCO training became available in October 2022 and will run until August 2024. SENCOs working in group-based and childminder settings are eligible for this package of support, which is nationally available, with targeting in specific areas based on levels of disadvantage.

■ Regional Planning and Development: East of England

Rachel Hopkins: [\[126890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association entitled *Levelling Up in the East of England: the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions*, published on 13 December 2022, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to implement the recommendations in that report on improving alignment of her Department's policies with those of other Departments on (a) health, (b) the economy and (c) income and benefits.

Nick Gibb:

To facilitate cross-Government working on the Levelling Up agenda, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities leads a group including ministers from all Departments. The group provides support, challenge, and accountability to drive progress on the missions.

■ Schools

Rachael Maskell: [\[124000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to enable local authorities to provide co-ordination across all schools within their local authority area, including with schools run by academies to advance education within their areas.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to high quality academy trusts as a key vehicle to improve educational standards by delivering sustainable school improvement.

The Department also supports Local Authorities to coordinate and collaborate across schools to best meet the needs of children in their area.

■ Schools: Finance

Munira Wilson: [\[126835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to promote the financial sustainability of schools with falling pupil rolls.

Nick Gibb:

The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools' budget of £2.3 billion for both financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Taking the Dedicated Schools Grant allocations and the additional funding announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement together, core schools funding is

increasing by £3.5 billion in 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. This takes the total core schools budget for 2023/24 to £57.3 billion. The core schools budget will total £58.8 billion in 2024/25.

The 'lagged' funding system in the schools National Funding Formula, where schools are funded on the basis of their pupil numbers in the previous October census, helps to give schools more certainty over funding levels. This aids their planning, and is particularly important in giving schools that see year on year reductions in their pupil numbers time to re-organise their staffing and costs.

Local Authorities are also allocated growth funding, which they can use to support schools with falling rolls. This funding can be used to support good and outstanding schools with falling rolls where local planning data shows that the surplus places will be needed with the next three financial years. In 2022/23, 24 out of 150 Local Authorities chose to have falling rolls funds.

The Department has consulted on changes to the role of the Local Authority in managing pupil growth, and falling rolls, as part of our consultation 'Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula'. This included proposals on allowing some additional flexibility on how Local Authorities can operate their falling rolls funds.

The Department will publish the Government response to this consultation in spring 2023.

■ Schools: Rural Areas

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[126888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and EELGA entitled Levelling Up in the East of England - the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendation in that report for a review of the funding formula that applies to rural schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the essential role that rural schools play in their communities. The National Funding Formula accounts for the particular challenges faced by small schools in rural areas through the lump sum and sparsity factor.

In recent years, the Department has made changes to the sparsity factor that have seen the total amount it allocates increase from £26 million in the 2020/21 financial year to £95 million in 2022/23. It will increase again to £97 million in 2023/24.

From 2022/23, the Department began measuring schools' remoteness more accurately, by road distances, and this led to a significant increase in the number of schools eligible for sparsity funding to over 2,500 schools in total.

■ Special Educational Needs

Munira Wilson: [126833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the SEND improvement plan to be published by her Department later this month will be accompanied by an analysis of the additional workforce needed to implement proposals contained within it.

Claire Coutinho:

The department knows that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) frequently require access to additional support from a broad specialist workforce across education, health, and care. The SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper published in March 2022, set out proposals to commission analysis to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND from the therapeutic and diagnostic workforce are supported through effective workforce planning.

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

The department is committed to publishing a full response to the green paper in an improvement plan early this year. We will continue to support the system in the immediate term to deliver change, improving the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP.

■ Special Educational Needs: Greater London

Munira Wilson: [126832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Teachers of the Deaf, (b) Teachers for the Visually Impaired and (c) special educational needs coordinators are employed by schools (i) in and (ii) run by the (A) London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and (B) Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames in the latest period for which information is available.

Claire Coutinho:

Information on the number of qualified teachers of the deaf or for the visually impaired is not collected by the department.

Information on the school workforce in England is collected as part of the annual School Workforce Census each November. Information is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

As at November 2021, the latest figures available, there were 57 special educational needs coordinators employed by state-funded schools in Richmond upon Thames local authority and 49 in Kingston upon Thames local authority. Figures by school type can be found in the table below.

Headcount of special educational needs coordinators employed by state-funded schools, by local authority and school type (November 2021)

LOCAL AUTHORITY	ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS	LOCAL AUTHORITY MAINTAINED SCHOOLS ONLY
Kingston upon Thames	49	31
Richmond upon Thames	57	44

■ **Teachers: Labour Turnover and Recruitment**

Colleen Fletcher:

[129940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Nick Gibb:

The number of teachers remains high, with over 465,500 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers working in state funded schools across the country. This is over 24,000 more than in 2010. There are over 52,000 FTE teachers in the West Midlands, an increase of almost 1,300 since 2010. There are just under 3,200 in Coventry, an increase of almost 100 since 2010.

The Department announced a £181 million financial incentives package for those starting initial teacher training (ITT) in the 2023/24 academic year. The Department is providing bursaries worth up to £27,000 and scholarships worth up to £29,000 to encourage trainees to apply to train in key secondary subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing. The Department has expanded the offer to international trainees in physics and languages.

The Department provides a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 annually for Mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who work in disadvantaged schools nationally, including within Education Investment Areas (EIAs). The Department provides the highest payments to teachers in eligible schools in EIAs. In the West Midlands, Coventry and four other Local Authorities are EIAs. There are seven schools in the Coventry North East constituency eligible for the Levelling Up Premium, as well as 27 schools in the Coventry area, and over 200 schools in the West Midlands. The eligibility criteria and list of eligible schools is available on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/levelling-up-premium-payments-for-teachers>.

The Department has recently raised starting salaries outside London by 8.9% to £28,000 and remains committed to the Department's ambition of delivering £30,000 starting salaries to attract talented people to teaching.

In autumn 2021, the Department launched the 'Apply for teacher training' digital service. This enables a more streamlined, user friendly application route to attract and train teachers.

The Department will deliver 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities by the end of 2024, giving all teachers and school leaders access to world class, evidence based training and professional development at every stage of their career.

To support retention in the first few years of teaching, the Department has rolled out the Early Career Framework nationally, providing the foundations for a successful career in teaching. This is backed by over £130 million a year in funding.

The Department has also launched a new and updated suite of National Professional Qualifications for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to develop expertise in high quality teaching practice to those leading multiple schools across trusts.

The Department is committed to taking a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, and to ensuring that staff wellbeing policy is integrated within schools' culture. The Department has published a range of resources to help address staff workload and wellbeing. This includes the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, which the Department is encouraging schools to sign up to as a shared commitment to promote staff wellbeing. More than 2,400 schools have signed up to the Charter since it was launched in November 2021. The Department has also published the workload reduction toolkit, developed alongside school leadership staff to help reduce workload, and resources to support schools to implement effective flexible working practices. Additionally, before the COVID-19 pandemic, average teacher and headteacher working hours reduced by five hours per week over the previous three years, as found by the Teacher Workload Survey in 2019.

■ Teachers: Pay

Dean Russell:

[\[126857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data her Department holds on the proportion of qualified classroom teachers expected to move up the pay scale through progression or promotion in academic year 2022-23; what the maximum pay increase is a qualified classroom teacher could receive in academic year 2022-23; what proportion of teachers were at the top of their pay scale as of 1 January 2023; and what proportion of qualified classroom teachers are expected to move up the pay scale through progression or promotion in academic year 2022-23 who are not already at the top of their pay scale.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has implemented in full the School Teachers' Review Body's (STRB) recommendation of an 8.9% pay rise for early career teachers outside London, and a 5% pay rise for experienced teachers in 2022/23. This is the highest pay award in 30 years.

Teachers who remain in consecutive service are often eligible for a pay rise over and above the headline pay award, due to pay progression or promotion, as they move through the main and upper pay scales.

The Department's written evidence to the STRB in 2021 estimated that, on average, 85% of teachers in early career (on the first five advisory pay points of the main pay range M1-M5) and 40% of experienced teachers below the top of the upper pay range (on M6-U2) received such a pay rise each year. This analysis was based on school workforce census and teacher pension scheme data, with the same pattern identified across several years. By combining these estimated progression rates with the distribution of classroom teachers on each advisory pay point, the Department estimates that around 40% of all qualified classroom teachers who remain in consecutive service receive a pay rise from progression or promotion. In 2022/23, teachers who progressed up the pay scale could see pay rises of up to 15.9% in total from the combination of the pay award and progression or promotion.

Some teachers are not eligible for progression. Close to a third of qualified classroom teachers are not eligible because they are at the top of the upper pay range (UPR). Last September, these teachers saw their pay rise to at least £43,685. The Department has previously published the estimated distribution of classroom teachers by advisory pay point in the rest of England pay region. The distribution used in the calculations above is based on the school workforce census with data from November 2021, as more recent data is not available, and is generated using a methodology consistent with both the statistical publication and previously published evidence to the STRB. This data is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

If we exclude the third of teachers who are already at the top of their pay range, as outlined above, the Department estimates that around 60% of the remaining teachers are expected to receive a pay rise over and above the headline award due to progression or promotion.

Teachers can also receive additional payments for taking on extra responsibilities, and there is a separate pay range for those in leadership roles.

■ Teachers: Sick Leave

Bridget Phillipson:

[129768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of teachers who took sickness absence in each local authority in England in 2021-2022.

Nick Gibb:

Information on the number of teachers who took sickness absence in the 2021/22 academic year will be published in June 2023.

The Department collects information on teacher sickness absence from all state funded schools via the School Workforce Census, held in November each year since 2010. Each census collects data for absence from the previous academic year. The latest data available covers the academic year September 2020 to August 2021.

In the 2020/21 academic year, 229,898 (45%) of teachers took sickness absence. This information by Local Authority and for earlier academic years is published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/9dc02161-51d6-41ff-2c97-08dafaf734a0>.

■ Training: East of England

Rachel Hopkins: [126891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association entitled Levelling Up in the East of England: the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions, published on 13 December 2022, if she will take steps to implement the recommendations in that report on delivering more in-work education provision and participation in (a) further education and (b) skills training for adults.

Robert Halfon:

Workplace activity is already a key element of our skills programmes. This includes apprenticeships, which give employees hands-on training to start and progress in work and offer a high quality alternative to academic and classroom-based qualifications. We are increasing investment in apprenticeships to £2.7 billion by 2024/25.

New T Levels are high quality, technical qualifications and every T Level student must complete a mandatory industry placement of a minimum of 45 days. This must take place with an external employer. We will be investing up to £500 million extra a year for T Levels once they are fully rolled out.

The department is investing £1.6 billion through the National Skills Fund across the 2022 to 2025 financial years. This includes up to £550 million to significantly expand Skills Bootcamps and Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs, so that more adults across all regions of the country can access the training. New Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for adults aged 19 or over, which give adults the opportunity to build valuable, sector-specific skills, based on local employer demand and provide a direct path to a job on completion.

Rachel Hopkins: [126892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and EELGA entitled Levelling Up in the East of England - the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendations in that report in respect of overall quality of training, access to training and a better alignment of training with employer need.

Robert Halfon:

The department is investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over the Parliament to ensure people can get onto the ladder of opportunity and access high-

quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity and supports levelling up.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance is a crucial first step to supporting individuals to access excellent education and skills training. Driven by the internationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks, secondary schools and colleges are embedding career learning in the curriculum and providing young people with tailored advice and guidance, including more opportunities to learn about skills and apprenticeships.

Through our National Careers Service digital campaigns, such as Get the Jump, we are bringing information about education and training courses into one place. Users can also search where to take courses.

Additionally, the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme continues to raise awareness of apprenticeships, traineeships, and T Levels in schools and colleges.

Employers have been central to the design and delivery of our skills policies such as through apprenticeships, T levels, and Institutes of Technology. The department set out in the Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth White Paper that we want to build on these successes, giving employers a key role in our skills system. By 2030, almost all technical courses will be on employer-led standards, ensuring that the education and training people receive are directly linked to the skills needed for jobs.

Employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are forging stronger, more dynamic and direct working arrangements between employers, skills providers, and local leaders. By embedding greater employer engagement in local skills systems, LSIPs will bring the demand and supply sides closer together. This will enable a coherent 'whole system' approach to skills planning and help people develop the skills they need to get good jobs and increase their prospects.

Rachel Hopkins:

[126893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report by the East of England APPG and EELGA entitled Levelling Up in the East of England - the Region's Progress towards the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of the recommendation in that report for opportunities for greater local oversight of skills funding and coordination across local partnerships.

Robert Halfon:

In the current academic year, the government has devolved approximately 60% of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA), which are responsible for the provision of AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocation of the AEB to providers. This includes Cambridgeshire and Peterborough MCA which received £11.9 million

devolved AEB in the 2022/23 financial year to enable it to address the skills needs of the area.

As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, devolution of adult education funding has been a core part of all MCA devolution deals to date. The department has committed to devolving adult education functions and the associated core AEB to new areas from 2025/26, as part of new devolution deals.

Over recent months, the department has been working with six new geographic areas, including Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council to support them with the announcement of their devolution deals. The government will fully devolve the AEB to Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council from the 2025/26 academic year, subject to readiness conditions and parliamentary approval of the required secondary legislation conferring the appropriate functions.

Apprenticeships funding is already devolved to employers across the country who decide which apprenticeships they offer. Funding for 16 to 19 education and training has not been devolved because it is different to adult education. It is a core part of the compulsory education and training system. Young people have a duty to participate up to the age of 18. It enables young people to choose from a set of high-quality options which will support them into an apprenticeship, into other work, or into additional learning such as higher education or higher technical programmes. As such it is important to maintain a national offer which is consistently high-quality across the country and promotes social mobility.

The National Skills Fund (NSF) is not devolved but uses a range of funding mechanisms to ensure a good range of adult skills provision is delivered across the country. Skills Bootcamps are being delivered online or across multiple areas of England. Funding includes £70 million to MCAs and the GLA and other local areas to deliver Skills Bootcamps that specifically meet local skills.

The department is currently making funding and accountability reforms, aiming to create a simpler and more effective system that spreads opportunity across England, focused on delivering good outcomes for learners, employers, and the taxpayer. We want to ensure that the funding system actively supports further education providers to work collaboratively with other local providers, local employers, and other key stakeholders. Two public consultations were ran, with the second one closing on 12 October 2022. A formal response to the second consultation will be published in spring 2023.

The Strategic Development Fund awarded the East of England £10.1 million to develop new courses and facilities in sectors identified as having the greatest skills challenges. Building on this, Employer Representative Bodies are now leading on the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans across the region. The plans will set out priority changes to provision and associated funding will help enable providers to adapt their curriculum offer.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Antibiotics****Beth Winter:****[101810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a national surveillance programme of the spread of antibiotic (a) resistance and (b) residues from farms into the environment.

Mark Spencer:

A cross-departmental project called Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE) was established in 2021. It brings together the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) to understand how pathogens and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is spread. PATH-SAFE contains a workstream focused on AMR prevalence in three river catchments and this work will strengthen our understanding of AMR in the environment, including the relative importance of different sources, transmission routes and, the implications are for people, animals, food and ecosystems. This will enable us to increase public awareness and inform effective control measures to protect human and animal health and the ecosystem, through a better understanding of the transmission pathway by which resistance develops and spreads.

The Environment Agency (EA) have also been working with water companies on chemicals investigations which have included a range of pharmaceuticals and veterinary medicines discharged from treated sewage effluent. The system allows the EA to sift and to screen any chemical substance nominated using, where available, hazard data and environmental monitoring data to prioritise whether a substance may be a possible chemical of concern in England. Many pharmaceuticals are included on this list. Monitoring also takes place for a wide range of pharmaceuticals within the water environment using a semi-quantitative screening methodology.

Background to the work can be found in Antimicrobial resistance surveillance pilot site selection and data-base extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Framework for understanding environmental antimicrobial resistance in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Agriculture: Infectious Diseases**Beth Winter:****[102981]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of trends in the level of the spread of superbugs into water courses from farms in the last 12 months.

Rebecca Pow:

A cross-departmental project called Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and the Environment (PATH-SAFE) was established in 2021. It brings together the Food Standards Agency, Food Standards Scotland, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) to understand how pathogens and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is spread. PATH-SAFE contains a workstream focused on AMR prevalence in three river catchments and this work will strengthen our understanding of AMR in the environment, including the relative importance of different sources, transmission routes and, the implications are for people, animals, food and ecosystems. This will enable us to increase public awareness and inform effective control measures to protect human and animal health and the ecosystem, through a better understanding of the transmission pathway by which resistance develops and spreads.

The Environment Agency (EA) have also been working with water companies on chemicals investigations which have included a range of pharmaceuticals and veterinary medicines discharged from treated sewage effluent. The system allows the EA to sift and to screen any chemical substance nominated using, where available, hazard data and environmental monitoring data to prioritise whether a substance may be a possible chemical of concern in England. Many pharmaceuticals are included on this list. Monitoring also takes place for a wide range of pharmaceuticals within the water environment using a semi-quantitative screening methodology.

Background to the work can be found in Antimicrobial resistance surveillance pilot site selection and data-base extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Framework for understanding environmental antimicrobial resistance in England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control**Stephen Morgan:****[109801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of government spending on supporting local authorities in improving air quality.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra provides a large amount of funding to Local Authorities. Under the Local Air Quality Management Framework, we have recently updated our statutory guidance for local authorities to support them to tackle air pollution.

■ Air Pollution: Standards**Stephen Morgan:****[109802]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to (a) support and (b) encourage local authorities in meeting WHO guidelines on air quality..

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra provides a large amount of funding to Local Authorities. Under the Local Air Quality Management Framework, we have recently updated our statutory guidance for local authorities to support them to tackle air pollution.

■ Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[128709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill's remaining stages will take place.

Mark Spencer:

The next stage of the Bill will be announced in the usual way.

■ Dangerous Dogs**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[122489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing (a) the Dangerous Dogs Act and (b) breed specific legislation.

Rebecca Pow:

We currently have no plans to review Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

The Government firmly believes that these restrictions play a very important part in our overall approach towards tackling dangerous dogs.

■ Dartmoor National Park**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[129758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the High Court ruling on 13 January 2023 that Section 10(1) of the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 does not confer on the public any right to pitch tents or otherwise make camp overnight on the Dartmoor Commons.

Trudy Harrison:

The Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 established a right of access to the commons on foot and horseback for the purpose of open-air recreation and provided the National Park Authority with certain powers to regulate and manage public access to the commons. Following the recent court judgement an agreement has been reached in principle that will enable people to continue wild camping in parts of Dartmoor National Park

The Government recognises the importance of providing access and is continuing to deliver a number of policies including work to complete the England Coast Path; the creation of a new National Trail across the North of England; a first review of open access mapping and the provision of safe and appropriate public access in as many woodlands as possible as set out in the England Trees Action Plan.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Brexit**Sir Bill Wiggin:**[\[109459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment they have made of the impact of the UK's departure from the EU on their ability to deliver successful policy outcomes.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Leaving the EU has provided the UK with the freedom to conceive and implement laws and policies that put the UK first and the opportunity to think creatively about how it regulates its economy for the good of the country as a whole.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**Emily Thornberry:**[\[118880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card in November 2021, what accounts for the difference between the price of the payments made to Hotel Ibis by the Joint Nature Conservation Society on (a) 2 November for £2,719.00 and (b) 5 November 2021 for 2,649.80 for the accommodation of four staff between 31 October and 9 November 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

A team of JNCC's experts attended the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Glasgow in November 2021. Their involvement included hosting eleven livestream events on nature-based solutions for a net zero and resilient future, monitoring landscape change, addressing threats through global, national, and local approaches, international partnerships and oceans action.

The payments to the IBIS hotel for 31 October to 9 November 2021 were for two JNCC staff members for ten nights and one staff member staying for two nights, at a total cost of £5,368.80. All were attending the CoP-26 conference in Glasgow. The difference in the two sums is because the hotel divided up the total cost into two- part payments.

■ Diseases of Poultry (England) Order 2003**Stella Creasy:**[\[129808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether she plans to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Diseases of Poultry (England) Order 2003.

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 Poultry (England) Order 2003 (2013: 1078).

■ Environment Protection: EU Law

Ruth Jones:

[\[106473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that environmental protections are not weakened as a result of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Secretary of State has already set out her approach to remove legislation superfluous to the UK, review the effectiveness of EU regulation in achieving environmental outcomes and retain, by default, environmental legislation for the UK to achieve existing environmental outcomes.

Ruth Jones:

[\[106475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the new measures to protect the environment through the Environment Act will be commenced before parallel measures are revoked in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

Trudy Harrison:

The Secretary of State has already set out her approach to remove legislation superfluous to the UK, review the effectiveness of EU regulation in achieving environmental outcomes and retain, by default, environmental legislation for the UK to achieve existing environmental outcomes.

Ruth Jones:

[\[106476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential risks created by the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill to environmental protections.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Yes. Given our stated approach, there is no risk.

■ Flood Control

Ed Davey:

[\[126903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she has taken to help reduce surface water flooding since 25 October 2022.

Rebecca Pow:

Surface water flooding is localised and complex and is the responsibility of lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) to manage and mitigate. They do this in partnership with

highways authorities and water companies. It is for LLFAs to determine the best approach to mitigating the risk.

The Government is also taking action. On 10 January 2023 Government published the review of making sustainable drainage systems mandatory in new developments through the implementation of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Sustainable drainage uses features such as ponds and grass to absorb the rain and tanks and pipes to slow the flow, reducing the risk of surface water flooding. Government accepted the recommendation Schedule 3 is implemented and will now consider scope, threshold and process. There will be a public consultation later this year, with implementation expected during 2024.

In July 2021 we restated our commitment to ensuring surface water flood risk is tackled and published a progress update on our Surface Water Management Action Plan and our response to the independent review into surface water and drainage responsibilities. Progress is being made on these through:

- changing partnership funding rules to enable more surface water schemes in our new £5.2bn flood defence programme which is expected to deliver around 500 surface water schemes better protecting around 30,000 properties.
- providing funding to increase surface water flood risk mapping in 28 LLFAs areas (nine are in London) providing 3.6 million people with more detailed information
- improving forecasting and response to surface water flooding through a project led by the Environment Agency, Met Office and Flood Forecasting Centre.
- requiring water companies to produce Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans to address current and future pressure on drainage networks and to develop collaborative solutions.

■ Floods: Sewers

Ed Davey:

[126902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of flooding on sewage overflows.

Rebecca Pow:

The recent heavy and intense rainfall has shown how storms can overwhelm both drainage and sewerage networks leading to sewage overflows and / or to flooding of roads and properties. To improve the future capacity of the sewer network the Environment Agency, Water UK and Ofwat have worked with risk management authorities to inform water company Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans. These plans will help improve resilience to surface water and drainage flood risks and play an important part in eliminating harm from storm overflows.

■ Forests: Access

Derek Thomas:

[\[129938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to publish the Woodland Access Implementation Plan.

Trudy Harrison:

In the England Trees Action Plan, we committed to implementing policies to allow the provision of safe and appropriate public access in as many woodlands as possible through a suite of measures from updating of Forestry Commission guidance through to plans to encourage improvements to the quality and permanency of existing access. Defra is already working in partnership with communities, landowners and user groups across these areas and will release more information in due course.

■ Hedgehogs: Environment Protection

Ruth Jones:

[\[126812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she has taken to protect wild hedgehogs from discarded toxic waste.

Rebecca Pow:

It is an offence to dump waste of any kind (often referred to as fly-tipping), and councils have legal powers to take enforcement action against fly-tippers.

In recent years we have bolstered local authorities' powers, such as by introducing fixed penalty notices.

Defra continues to chair the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group, through which we work with a wide range of interested parties such as the Environment Agency, Countryside Alliance, National Farmers Union and local authorities, to promote and disseminate good practice with regard to preventing fly-tipping. The Environment Agency is responsible for dealing with those incidents of fly-tipping which involve waste that has the potential to damage the environment (such as hazardous waste).

Last year we provided capital funding of £450,000 to enable several councils to implement a range of measures to tackle fly-tipping. We have also consulted on the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking and reforming the waste carrier, broker, and dealer regime. We are working to publish our response shortly.

We believe it is important that local residents are able to dispose of their rubbish in a responsible and convenient manner. Last year we consulted on preventing charges for disposing of DIY waste at household waste recycling centres. We are working to publish the Government response in due course.

All of these actions seek to protect our wildlife, including hedgehogs, by ensuring toxic waste does not enter the environment.

■ Highly Protected Marine Areas

Henry Smith: [\[122117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his Department's policy to create at least five no-take Highly Protected Marine Areas.

Trudy Harrison:

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

■ Livestock: Antibiotics

Ruth Jones: [\[114825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing of a ban on the prophylactic use of antibiotics on healthy farm animals to align with EU policy.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The UK Government is committed to reducing unnecessary use of antibiotics in animals while safeguarding animal welfare. It has been our position for many years that we do not support the routine or predictable use of antibiotics, including where antibiotics are used to compensate for inadequate farming practices.

■ London Underground: Air Pollution

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[122482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the study entitled Magnetic and microscopic investigation of airborne iron oxide nanoparticles in the London Underground published in Scientific Reports on 15 December 2022, what discussions she has had with the Secretaries of State for Transport and Health and Social care and the Mayor of London about (a) the potential impact of the detected Fe-oxide particles on passenger health; and (b) implementing the reduction recommendations.

Rebecca Pow:

Local Air Quality Management in London is devolved to the Mayor of London.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron: [\[119924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to correspondence about a constituent from the Hon. member for Basildon and

Billericay dated (a) 20 September 2022, (b) 19 October 2022, (c) 16 November 2022 and (d) 20 December 2022, reference JB38900.

Mark Spencer:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 19 January 2023.

■ **Moorland: Gun Sports**

Craig Whittaker:

[\[96596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make a comparative assessment of the survival of heather on moorland where grouse shooting (a) does and (b) does not take place.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government is not currently considering conducting any such assessment

The land management of heather dominated habitats has been extensively studied. We do not believe there is a need for further Government funded research at this stage.

■ **Pet Travel Scheme: Dogs**

Rosie Duffield:

[\[122491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to take steps to (a) reduce the cost and (b) simplify processes for applying to take a dog on holiday to an EU country.

Rebecca Pow:

The pet health and documentary requirements for pet travel to the EU are set out under the EU Pet Travel Regulations. The UK is listed as a 'Part 2' third country under those regulations. We are continuing to seek agreement from the European Commission on awarding GB 'Part 1' listed status and recognition of the UK's tapeworm-free status.

Achieving these would alleviate a number of pet travel rules for all travellers, including the need for an Animal Health Certificate for each trip to the EU. We see no valid animal health reason for these not to be granted.

The costs of completing and issuing an Animal Health Certificate are commercial decisions, set by individual veterinary practices.

■ **Poultry: Animal Housing**

Julian Knight:

[\[129873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer on 7 September 2022 to Question 45590, what recent discussions her Department has had with relevant stakeholders on publishing a consultation on the use of cages for laying hens.

Mark Spencer:

Please see response given on 7th September 2022 to [PQ 45590](#).

■ **Reservoirs: Construction**

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[125522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to encourage the building of new reservoirs.

Rebecca Pow:

The Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat sets out the Government's commitment to improve the resilience of water supplies in England. This requires water companies to take a twin track approach of increasing water supplies, such as building new reservoirs, and reducing demand for water, including leakage reduction.

Water companies are investing £469 million in the current price review period (2020-2025) to investigate the strategic water supply infrastructure required to improve water supply resilience in England. Water companies are now consulting on their statutory draft water resources management plans, which set out in detail the new water supply and demand management measures needed to secure supplies in the long term.

■ **Sewage: Water Companies**

Sarah Jones:

[\[128700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that water companies do not discharge sewage during dry spells.

Rebecca Pow:

Environment Agency [guidance](#) requires that storm overflows are designed so that the they do not spill in dry weather. It is the responsibility of water companies to comply with their permits and to avoid polluting the environment. If overflows operate outside of permit conditions, the Environment Agency has a range of enforcement powers, including criminal prosecution for which there can be unlimited fines.

■ **Shellfish: Sales**

Alex Sobel:

[\[114848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to ban the online sale of live crustaceans from online retailers, including Amazon.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

No. Government will continue to engage with industry and stakeholders on the welfare of crustaceans.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[130088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 9 of the London School of Economics report Review of the Evidence of Sentience in Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans, whether her Department has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the recommendation on wholesale and retail; and whether her Department has plans to end the sale of live decapod crustaceans by (a) Amazon and (b) other online retailers.

Mark Spencer:

We are considering carefully the implications of recognising in law the sentience of decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs. The Government currently has no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a ban on the sale of live decapods online.

■ **Specified Sugar Products (England) Regulations 2003**

Stella Creasy:

[129809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether she plans to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Specified Sugar Products (England) Regulations 2003.

Mark Spencer:

We remain committed to maintaining our world leading standards of food safety and quality. Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its retained EU law to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Bill, including in relation to The Specified Sugar Products (England) Regulations 2003.

■ **Wind Power: Noise**

Kerry McCarthy:

[129733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department provides support to local authorities to help them investigate complaints from local residents of Low Frequency Sound Noise nuisance.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra commissioned the University of Salford to produce a Procedure for the Assessment of Low Frequency Noise Disturbance. This document, which is available here: https://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/493/1/NANR45-procedure_rev1_23_12_2011.pdf is considered the best practice standard for professionals investigating low frequency noise complaints, and we consider that it remains fit for purpose.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Bangladesh: Elections****Catherine West:**[\[129912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has offered support to the Government of Bangladesh to support a free and fair election in that country.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is committed to supporting Bangladesh to conduct free, fair and inclusive national elections in January 2024. We regularly raise with the Government of Bangladesh, in public and private, the need to take meaningful steps to ensure a transparent and accountable electoral process. We welcome Prime Minister Hasina's recent statement welcoming international election observers. The UK also regularly urges the Government to ensure that conduct by law enforcement and political activists are disciplined, allowing all parties to organise and campaign safely. Through our development programming, the UK supports civil society actors to help protect and expand civic and political space, for a more peaceful and inclusive politics in Bangladesh.

■ **Boris Johnson****Dan Jarvis:**[\[129842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department provided (a) administrative, (b) financial and (c) logistical support to the Rt hon Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip for his visit to Ukraine in January 2023.

Leo Docherty:

The former Prime Minister travelled to Ukraine in a private capacity. In line with the practice of successive Administrations, the Government does not comment on security matters.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Sovereignty****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[126736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what legal basis he began negotiations with Mauritius on the British Indian Ocean Territory.

David Rutley:

Negotiations have begun between the UK and Mauritius on the exercise of sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory /Chagos Archipelago. Through negotiations, taking into account relevant legal proceedings, it is our intention to secure an agreement on the basis of international law to resolve all outstanding issues in relation the British Indian Ocean Territory/Chagos Archipelago.

■ China: Foreign Investment in UK

Catherine West:

[\[129917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has had recent discussions with (a) the Scottish Government, (b) the Welsh Government and (c) leaders of devolved areas in England on the use of (i) Chinese state-owned technology and (ii) Chinese investment in (A) key infrastructure projects and (B) publicly-owned property for which those bodies are responsible.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regularly engages with the devolved administrations across a range of issues and will provide them with information and analysis on international developments that may affect their responsibilities or be relevant to their interests.

The UK Government recognises China as a systemic competitor and has taken robust action to build our domestic resilience and safeguard our national security. We have put in place a range of measures to protect our infrastructure and supply chains, including the National Security and Investment Act. On 24 November, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster laid a Written Ministerial Statement setting out the steps we are taking to cease the deployment of Chinese visual surveillance systems onto sensitive government sites. We will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

■ China: Higher Education

Catherine West:

[\[129914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Education and (b) officials in that Department on potential links between the UK higher education sector and Chinese institutions alleged to be complicit in malign activities.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Foreign Secretary has not discussed these issues with the Secretary of State for Education. The UK Government is committed to supporting the UK higher education sector to engage with China in a way that reflects the UK's values and takes account of national security concerns. FCDO officials will continue to work closely with colleagues across government, including with the Department for Education, and partners in the education sector, to strengthen protective measures.

■ Colombia: Homicide

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[127705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Colombian counterpart on reports that Colombia saw the highest number of killings of community activists registered in the last six years in 2022.

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.

■ **Cuba: Russia****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[129746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that experts from Russia's Stolypin Institute for the Economy of Growth and Cuban Government experts are planning to create a Centre for Economic Transformation together.

David Rutley:

We have noted the announcement that Russian and Cuban experts are planning to set up a Centre for Economic Transformation. The British Embassy in Havana often holds meetings with the Cuban Government in which development requirements of the Cuban economy are talked about, including the need and place for private small- and medium-sized businesses in a sustainable economy.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution****Emily Thornberry:**[\[118921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2022 to Question 106393 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, how many purchases with a value less than £500 were made against his Department's budget through a Government procurement card in 2021.

David Rutley:

The FCDO made 120,431 purchases in 2021 on goods and services with a transaction value less than £500 using Government Procurement Cards. Government Procurement Cards provide an efficient route to enable key staff to procure goods and services, necessary to the promotion of British interests overseas and the maintenance of our Embassies and High Commissions. All purchases are subject to authorisation by managers and audit checks. Local budgets are scrutinised for waste, and fraud is monitored by our audit teams to ensure best value to the tax payer.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[123888\]](#)

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 November 2021, who attended the events at (a) Plataran and (b) Kaum, on 11 November 2021; and whether either of those events included any expenditure on alcoholic beverages.

David Rutley:

These refer to lunch and dinner events during the official Ministerial visit to Jakarta by the former Foreign Secretary the Rt Hon. Liz Truss MP, 10 - 12 November 2021. Participants at both included the former Foreign Secretary and delegation, our Ambassador to Indonesia and other British Embassy officials. Expenditure was subject to normal FCDO controls.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[129736\]](#)

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 Zafferano Catering was paid (i) £4,726.84 on 6 April 2022 and (ii) £2,567.64 on 14 July 2022.

David Rutley:

The sums referred to relate to a range of events held at Lancaster House, hosted by Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon as FCDO Minister of State. These included:

- (i) a luncheon with Caribbean High Commissioners on the 14th March and a reception for key representatives of the US on 16th March.
- (ii) The Civil Service Operational Delivery Awards jointly hosted by the Cabinet Office and HMRC on 24th May

All expenses undergo rigorous oversight to ensure they are reasonable and adhere to FCDO spending regulations. We are not releasing the guest lists for these events given these contain personal data of third parties and release would therefore be contrary to our obligations under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[129737\]](#)

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 Ann Kristin Catering was paid (i) 1,347.25 on 27 September 2021 and (ii) £1,154.69 on 3 December 2021.

David Rutley:

This relates to two events used to promote relations with Portugal and Portuguese business stakeholders operating in the UK. These included:

- (i) UK-Portugal Parliamentary Friendship Group Lunch with Minister Wendy Morton MP and a British Embassy Lisbon led event on 27th September 2021

(ii) a Lord Mayor's Lunch with Portuguese business community.

All expenses undergo rigorous oversight to ensure they are reasonable and adhere to FCDO spending regulations. We are not releasing the guest lists for these events given these contain personal data of third parties and release would therefore be contrary to our obligations under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[129738\]](#)

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 February 2022, what services were purchased by his Department from Scriberia Ltd on 23 February 2022, and for what purpose.

David Rutley:

The cost was for commissioning a specialist design and communication agency that offered expertise that were not available in house, to support a major engagement initiative at short notice. All expenses undergo rigorous oversight to ensure they are reasonable and adhere to FCDO spending regulations.

■ **Palestinians: Human Rights**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[126760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Palestinian territory.

David Rutley:

Human Rights is a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. This is why we regularly raise Human Rights issues with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, where they exist. We call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution, as the Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, made clear during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January. The UK's Permanent Representative to the UN, Dame Barbara Woodward, urged the parties to demonstrate, through their policies, a genuine commitment to peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians at a UNSC open debate on 17 January.

■ **Venezuela: Gold and Foreign Exchange Reserves**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[120148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the removal of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Venezuelan gold stored in the Bank of England.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[120151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department held discussions with counterparts in the United States on Venezuelan gold stored at the Bank of England between 23 and 31 January 2019.

Kenny MacAskil:

[\[120152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) officials and (b) Ministers in his Department have had discussions with counterparts in the United States on Venezuelan gold stored in the Bank of England since 2019.

David Rutley:

The issue regarding control of the gold reserves is the subject of ongoing litigation and it would not be appropriate for FCDO to comment. The UK Government is not a party to the legal case.

We are working with a range of international partners, including the US, to encourage a democratic transition in Venezuela through free and fair presidential elections. This is essential to help to bring an end to the multiple crises afflicting the Venezuelan people.

■ **Venezuela: Public Sector**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[126551\]](#)

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 teachers and public sector workers in Venezuela took to the streets on 16 January 2023 in at least 13 states to protest for increased salaries.

David Rutley:

There have been a number of recent protests by workers calling for higher public sector wages in Venezuela. Our policies towards Venezuela already take account of the economic and humanitarian crises in the country. Extraordinary levels of inflation, and the consequent destruction of wealth and of earning power, will have been important factors taken into account by the estimated 7 million Venezuelans who have taken the difficult decision to leave their country during recent years.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Ambulance Services: Standards**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[129874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the ambulance response times for (a) strokes and (b) other category 2 emergencies; and what consideration he has given to adding strokes to category 1 emergencies.

Will Quince:

As announced in the Autumn Statement, the Government is investing an additional £3.3 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to enable to enable rapid action to improve urgent and emergency, elective, and primary care performance towards pre-

pandemic levels. In the coming weeks the National Health Service will set out detailed recovery plans to deliver faster ambulance response times.

This is in addition to significant investment in NHS and social care capacity to help improve patient flow and reduce ambulance handover delays. The NHS winter resilience plan will increase NHS bed capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, and an additional £250 million has been made available to enable the NHS to buy up beds in the community to safely discharge thousands of patients from hospital, and capital for discharge lounges and ambulance hubs. This is on top of the £500 million already invested last year.

No such consideration of strokes has been made by the Department. The clinical prioritisation of 999 calls is an operational matter for the ambulance service.

■ Autism: Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[129923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of integrated care boards' commissioning of autism services.

Rachael Maskell: [\[129924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve the integration of the care pathway for people with autism.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no current plans to make a specific assessment. The Health and Care Act 2022 builds on the work of non-statutory integrated care systems (ICSs) by establishing integrated care boards (ICBs) and requiring the creation of Integrated Care Partnerships. These provide the framework for more streamlined, integrated decision making.

We expect ICBs to have regard to the relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines when commissioning services, including autism services. Each ICB is also expected to have an Executive Lead for learning disability and autism to support the ICB in delivering care and support for autistic people in their area.

In addition, NHS England are developing a national framework which will support ICSs to make best use of resources to deliver improved outcomes in all age autism diagnostic care pathways.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Feryal Clark: [\[126865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his policy to ensure every person diagnosed with cancer has access to (a) personalised care, (b) a needs assessment, (c) a care plan and (d) health and wellbeing information and support.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Long Term Plan states that, where appropriate, every person diagnosed with cancer will have access to personalised care, including needs assessment, a care plan and health and wellbeing information and support. This is being delivered in line with the National Health Service Comprehensive Model for Personalised Care, empowering people to manage their care and the impact of their cancer and maximise the potential of digital and community-based support.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists**Feryal Clark:**[\[126866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that Integrated care boards are adequately funded to fulfil their responsibility for reducing cancer waiting times.

Helen Whately:

The Department has committed to spend £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to increase capacity and reduce waiting times in elective services, including for cancer diagnosis and treatment. As part of the Autumn Statement, the Government also committed to an additional £3.3 billion in each of 2023-24 and 2024-25 to support the National Health Service in England, enabling rapid action to improve emergency, elective and primary care performance towards pre-pandemic levels.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Daisy Cooper:**[\[127908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what clinical advice is available to Integrated Care Boards on the use of medical cannabis products.

Daisy Cooper:[\[127909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department has made available to Integrated Care Boards to enable them to prescribe medical cannabis products.

Daisy Cooper:[\[127910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with UK manufacturers of medical cannabis products on the adequacy of regulation of those products.

Will Quince:

The framework of National Health Service clinical advice on prescribing medicines will apply to clinicians working in integrated care boards (ICBs) as they have done to those working in the structures that preceded them.

Licensed cannabis-based medicines are routinely available and funded on the NHS. However, for unlicensed cannabis-based medicines, clinical guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) demonstrate a clear need for more evidence to support routine prescribing and funding decisions. NHS funding

decisions follow clearly developed procedures that ensure equitable distribution of funding, prioritising those medicines that have proved their safety, quality, and clinical and cost effectiveness.

In addition to the NICE guidelines, the Chief Medical Officer and NHS England issued a letter on the 31 October 2018, and a supplementary letter on 20 November 2018, providing guidance to clinicians, the NHS and independent organisations following the rescheduling of cannabis-based products for medicinal use. This signposts guidance issued by the Royal College of Physicians, British Paediatric Neurology Association and Association of British Neurologists.

The Department has met with manufacturers of both licensed and unlicensed cannabis-based medicines and heard views on the regulatory framework surrounding these products.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Dan Carden:

[\[126775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the Care Quality Commission's future ability to carry out effective inspections of visiting policy in care settings following his announcement that that body will reduce its inspections.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) issued a detailed statement on 24 January about how it will adjust its regulatory activity through the winter period. This means continuing to respond to the most serious risks in National Health Service organisations. For adult social care settings, CQC will increase the number of inspections of care homes and homecare agencies with a current rating of requires improvement. Inspections will be carried out where there is information to suggest there has been improvement since CQC's last inspection.

Every inspection of a care home includes a focus on visiting, regardless of the initial reason for inspecting. CQC also continues to monitor visiting through other routes, such as direct monitoring activity calls with providers.

■ Care Workers and Health Professions: Visas

Gareth Thomas:

[\[127691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on speeding up the processing of Health and Care Worker visas for those people roles in the NHS; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

My Rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has had no recent discussions with the Home Secretary on speeding up the processing of Health and Care Worker visas for those people in roles in the National Health Service.

Health and social care workers who apply for the Health and Care Worker visa benefit from a shorter service standard of 15 working days for a decision on their visa.

■ **Community Diagnostic Centres: Royston**

Sir Oliver Heald:

[\[126505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans for a new health centre, including for diagnostics, for (a) Royston and (b) the surrounding area; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Locations of new community diagnostic centres (CDCs) are determined by each integrated care system based on a detailed review of a range of factors, including accessibility for the most deprived local populations and through discussions with relevant local stakeholders. West Essex Community Diagnostic Centre will be opening in 2024 to increase diagnostic capacity and reduce waiting times, with state of the art equipment to deliver non obstetric ultrasound, x-ray, phlebotomy and point of care tests. Once fully operational, the CDC plans to deliver up to 115,157 scans, tests and checks a year. It is for Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board to determine whether a CDC is needed in Royston.

■ **Community Hospitals**

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[118800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential role of inpatient beds in community hospitals as step-down beds to release capacity in general hospitals; and how many inpatient beds there are in community hospitals in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 January 2023]: In line with the 'Home First' approach, patients for whom care and assessment can safely be continued in a non-acute setting should be discharged to their own home or a community setting. We are providing an additional £200 million of funding specifically for short term care. This will accelerate discharge and free up hospital beds for those who need them.

Information on the number of inpatient beds in community hospitals is not available in the format requested.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[122172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential removal of the covid-19 vaccination facility at Askham Bar in York, in the context of Nimbuscare requiring that site for the provision of services; what estimate he has made of the potential cost to the public

purse of removing that site from the current provider and installing a replacement site for a new provider; and if he will take steps to prevent this.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[122173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of repurposing temporary vaccination centres to deliver permanent NHS services.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 17 January 2023]: Due to the success of the vaccination programme in Humber and North Yorkshire the York Askham Bar facility closed on 16 December 2022. There remains plenty of alternative provision for vaccinations at community pharmacies in the area and no specific consultation was carried out on the closure of this site.

There is no cost to the local vaccination programme of removing the site at Askham Bar, and as there is no current intention to replace this centre with another there are no further costs associated with delivery of the programme.

No assessment has been made. NHS England regional teams have been charged with identifying temporary vaccination sites and have been advised that vaccination sites should where possible use existing National Health Service infrastructure.

■ Dementia: Diagnosis

Chris Green:

[\[123968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his 10-year plan for dementia will include provisions to recover the dementia diagnosis rate to pre-pandemic levels.

Helen Whately:

Timely diagnosis of dementia is vital to ensure that a person with dementia can access the advice, information, care and support that can help them to live well with the condition and remain independent for as long as possible.

In December 2022, the recovery of the dementia diagnosis rate to the national ambition of 66.7% was included in the National Health Service priorities and operational planning guidance as part of the refined mental health objectives for 2023/24. This reinforces the importance of dementia as a key priority for NHS England and provides a clear direction for integrated care boards to ensure support for delivery of timely diagnoses within systems, enabling access to appropriate post-diagnostic support.

■ Dentistry: Migrant Workers

James Wild:

[\[127913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on how long it takes to complete the Performer List Validation by Experience to enable overseas dentists to practice in the NHS in each Health Education England region.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table shows the stages of the Performers List Validation by Experience (PLVE) process timelines. They are consistent across regions but vary depending on individual cases.

STAGE	KEY ACTIVITY	USUAL DURATION
1	Once Primary Care Support England has identified that an applicant should be considered for PLVE then they are passed to Health Education England (HEE) for assessment.	Approximately 12 weeks
2	Applicant added to Performers List with requirement to complete PLVE.	Four to eight weeks
3	Formal PLVE process commences. Dentist commences practising in the National Health Service in HEE region at this point. <i>The period in PLVE supervision can be as little as six months but can be longer than 12 months to allow the dentist to practice NHS dentistry in a supportive environment.</i>	Current average is 12.8 months
4	Applicant is issued with Certificate of Demonstration of Equivalence by HEE and Performers List status is reviewed and confirmed by NHS England. Dentist continues to practice in NHS dentistry.	Data is not held.

■ Dentistry: Qualifications

Tulip Siddiq:[\[129865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Department's response to Question 13 to the consultation on Changes to the General Dental Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council's international registration legislation, for what reason his Department is pursuing with the proposal that international applicants to the dental care professionals register must hold a DCP in the context of 70 per cent of respondents disagreeing with that proposal.

Neil O'Brien:

The Order amends the General Dentist Council's (GDC) legislation so that international dentist qualifications cannot on their own be used in support of an application to the Dental Care Professional (DCP) register. Whilst we recognise that the majority of respondents to the public consultation disagreed with this proposal, we are proceeding with this change in the interests of patient safety. The Government and GDC recognise dentists and DCPs as distinct professions. The GDC's priority must be on ensuring only suitably qualified people join the professions and this legislative change ensures consistency between the United Kingdom and

international routes, since qualified dentists cannot apply to join the DCP register using their dentistry qualification.

The amendment made to the order following consultation enables the GDC to process applications from dentists to join the register as DCPs that are received up until the day before the order comes into force. This ensures that any live DCP title applications submitted before the legislation is passed will be processed.

The GDC will be introducing improvements to the Overseas Registration Exam which will support increased examinations capacity and help those dentists who may previously have utilised the DCP register route to complete the GDC registration process more quickly.

■ Diabetes: Mental Health Services

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[129852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report of the Diabetes and Mental Health Expert Working Group in England entitled An integrated care model for mental health in diabetes, published 20 December 2022, whether he will take steps to improve the integration of diabetes and mental health care outside of long-term conditions Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services.

Helen Whately:

The Government recognises the impact of diabetes on mental health and will further develop this work as part of the major Conditions Strategy announced by the Secretary of State on 24 January.

Since 2019, NHS England has funded two pilots in London and in Wessex to further develop the evidence base around how best to manage people with diabetes. Research showed a higher rate of eating and psychiatric disorder in people with type 1 diabetes patients. The National Health Service national diabetes programme commissioned MyType1 Diabetes. This platform is for type 1 diabetes patients and available nationwide. Healthy Living, a self-management online support programme was also commissioned for adults with type 2 diabetes. The platforms provide users with the skills and knowledge to manage their diabetes effectively, and offers information on treatments, advice on emotional and mental wellbeing, helping users adopt and maintain healthy behaviours around diet and exercise.

■ Direct Payments

Damian Green: [\[126506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of direct payments for social care.

Helen Whately:

It is a matter for local authorities to determine how best to meet the eligible care and support needs of care users in their areas and ensure that those needing care and support, or their nominated representatives, are given timely information about direct payments to facilitate choice.

■ Eating Disorders

Rachael Maskell:

[129935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of eating disorders; and what steps he is taking to help address the causes of eating disorders.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. However, we would expect, as part of new policy design and development, that all policies with implications for eating disorders should consider existing evidence and seek the views of experts and stakeholders.

In recognition of the rising demand for eating disorders services created by the pandemic, we invested £58 million in 2021/22 to support the expansion of adult community mental health services, including those for eating disorders. We also invested £79 million extra to expand children's mental health services in 2021/22, including enabling at least 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services.

We know that eating disorders are complicated mental health conditions caused by a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and environmental factors. It is unclear exactly why someone develops an eating disorder.

■ Eating Disorders: Community Care

Rachael Maskell:

[129933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to provide community support for people with eating disorders.

Maria Caulfield:

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, we are investing almost £1 billion extra in community mental health care for adults by 2023/24, improving community support for people with serious mental illnesses, including eating disorders. As part of this we are expanding community eating disorder services capacity, including crisis care and intensive home treatment.

Since 2016, investment in children and young people's community eating disorder services has risen every year, with an extra £54 million per year from 2022/23. This extra funding will enhance the capacity of community eating disorder teams across the country.

NHS England has also established 15 adult eating disorder provider collaboratives which cover the whole of England. These provider collaboratives are working to redesign the pathway for adults with eating disorders to bring care closer to home.

■ Eating Disorders: Medical Treatments

Rachael Maskell: [\[129934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the best practice course of treatment people with eating disorders.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no plans to make an assessment. All decisions about treatment should be taken jointly between the clinician and the patient. Decisions should be based on the best evidence available and national guidance where appropriate, so everyone gets the right treatments at the right time. We expect clinicians, commissioners, and providers to adhere to this guidance.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides national clinical guidelines concerning the recognition and treatment of eating disorders. NHS England has also published separate guidance to support the provision and commissioning of eating disorder services for children and young people and adults. NHS England is currently refreshing this guidance, including to increase the focus on early identification and intervention.

■ Eating Disorders: Young People

Rachael Maskell: [\[129931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will develop a specific strategy for supporting young people with eating disorders in the health and care system.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department announced on 24 January 2023 that, in consultation with NHS England and colleagues across Government, it will develop and publish a Major Conditions Strategy. The strategy will include prevention to treatment for mental ill health and will be focusing on areas that contribute most to morbidity and mortality. The Strategy will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care, building on measures that we have already taken forward through the NHS Long Term Plan.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Regulation

Adam Afriyie: [\[129765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is investigating cases of manufacturers overfilling e-cigarette devices above the 2ml e-liquid volume limit; and what support his Department is offering to the (a) Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and (b) Trading Standards Authority to help remove those products from the market.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no plans to investigate cases of manufacturers over filling vape (e-cigarette) devices beyond the two millilitres e-liquid volume limit because this is the responsibility of local enforcement agencies. The Department continues to work with

the Trading Standards Authorities to provide advice in enforcing the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016, including matters relating to the two millilitres e-liquid limit. We also work closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency regarding the vaping notification system and helping disseminate information about notified vapes to support local enforcement.

■ Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry

Priti Patel: [\[127751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the way in which the duty of candour is operating in respect of staff providing evidence to the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020.

Priti Patel: [\[127752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of evidence from current and former staff being provided to the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020.

Priti Patel: [\[127753\]](#)

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

Priti Patel: [\[127754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of whether the terms of reference for the independent inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex between 2000 and 2020 are achievable in the context of the inquiry's non-statutory status.

Neil O'Brien:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 January 2023 to Question 122453.

■ Food: Advertising

Caroline Lucas: [\[126583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 11 January 2023 to Question 117480, for what reasons he has not conducted an assessment on the potential impact of delaying the implementation of the junk food advertising restrictions to October 2025 on (a) rates of childhood obesity and (b) meeting the 2030 ambition to halve childhood obesity; if he has held discussions with health charities concerned with childhood obesity and other health impacts of junk food advertising on health on the potential consequences of the delay; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

An impact assessment has not been conducted because the policy has not been amended, it has only had its implementation delayed. We do not expect a short-term delay to the implementation to have a significant impact in the longer term. The Department has ongoing discussions with stakeholders, including health charities, on measures to reduce obesity.

■ **Genito-urinary medicine****Andrew Gwynne:**[\[126563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the Local Government Association finding that spending on STI testing, contraception and treatment in England has fallen by 17 per cent over the last seven years.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: No specific assessment has been made. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning comprehensive, open access sexual health services to meet local demand and individual local authorities decide on spending priorities based on an assessment of local need for sexual health services. In 2022/23, we have allocated more than £3.4 billion to local authorities in England to fund public health services, including sexual health services, through the public health grant. We will announce the 2023/24 public health grant allocations to local authorities in due course.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine and Reproduction****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[130047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department intends to support collaborative commissioning of sexual and reproductive health services (a) in NHS South East London Integrated Care System and (b) across England.

Neil O'Brien:

Local authorities across England are responsible for commissioning comprehensive, open access sexual health services to meet local demand, and it is for them to decide on commissioning arrangements based on an assessment of local need. NHS England has produced guidance for all integrated care systems to support collaborative commissioning.

The Women's Health Strategy, published in summer 2022, encourages the expansion of women's health hubs and other local models which bring together and improve access to women's health services. We encourage local commissioners and providers to consider adopting these models of care.

■ Genito-urinary Medicine: Monkeypox

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[126565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to support sexual health clinics as a result of the Mpox outbreak.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: We continue to work closely with the UK Health Security Agency, local authorities and NHS England to monitor the impact of monkeypox (mpox) on sexual health services and support system-wide action to maintain access to routine sexual and reproductive health services.

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

We will announce the 2023/24 public health grant allocations to local authorities in due course.

■ Health Services: Pilot Schemes

Luke Pollard:

[\[125488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on each of the six Cavell centre pilot project sites under consideration.

Luke Pollard:

[\[125489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has (a) commissioned, (b) reviewed and (c) approved any outline business cases for pilot Cavell centre super hubs of GP and other health services.

Luke Pollard:

[\[125490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has spent money from the public purse on pilot Cavell centre super hubs of GP and other health services.

Luke Pollard:

[\[125491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had discussions with local authorities on potential pilot Cavell centre super hubs of GP and other health services.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: NHS England has been developing a national programme business case for local community health and wellbeing hubs known collectively and informally as Cavell Centres. Since April 2021, NHS England has employed some of its existing organisational budget to support the development of outline business cases (OBCs) in six pioneer projects to test and develop the different elements of the standardised product. These pioneers are at different stages

of maturity, Hucknall and Staines-upon-Thames continue to develop the OBC. Sleaford continues to explore options for delivery and develop its OBC. Shrewsbury is preparing to undertake public consultation on emerging options.

Derby continues to make good progress bringing together National Health Service, community and third sector providers as they develop their OBC and Plymouth have a near finalised business case that has received endorsement from the system and region.

For a business case to be formally reviewed or approved by the Department a scheme needs to have identified and secured the capital budget required. This requirement has so far not been met for any of the six Cavell Centre pilot projects or the national programme business case. The Department remains committed to supporting local priorities and regularly discusses all areas of healthcare provision with local authorities and other key stakeholders.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[128715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the Health Inequalities White Paper.

Neil O'Brien:

On 24 January 2023 the Government announced that it will publish a Major Conditions Strategy and an interim report will be published in the summer. The strategy will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care. Interventions set out in the strategy will aim to alleviate pressure on the health system, as well as support the government's objective to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce ill-health related labour market inactivity.

The strategy will tackle conditions that contribute most to morbidity and mortality across the population in England including, cancers, cardiovascular disease, including stroke and diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, dementia, mental ill health and musculoskeletal conditions. Health disparities exist across a wide variety of conditions from cancer to mental health, and contribute to this variation in life expectancy.

The Major Conditions Strategy will apply a geographical lens to each condition to address regional disparities in health outcomes, supporting the levelling up mission to narrow the gap by 2030. As material for the Major Conditions Strategy will therefore cover many of the same areas as the Health Disparities White Paper, we will no longer be publishing it.

■ Health: Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will put in place a requirement that where a person has been admitted to hospital due to the effects of (a)

damp, cold, or mould in their home or (b) malnutrition, those issues are tackled before or when that patient is discharged from hospital; and if he will take steps with his Cabinet colleagues to require (i) local authorities and (ii) social housing providers to resolve such issues as part of that process.

Helen Whately:

Anyone requiring formal care and support to help them recover following their discharge from hospital should receive an initial safety and welfare check on the day of discharge to ensure basic safety and care needs are met and allow time for fuller assessments to take place as the person settles in their environment. Last year, the Government announced the £500 million adult social care discharge fund to support timely and safe discharge from hospital into the community by reducing the number of people delayed in hospital awaiting social care.

The fund can be used flexibly by local health and care systems to respond to local system need and can be spent on a wide range of activities. This could include measures to make housing fit for discharge when this can be shown to enable more people to be discharged to an appropriate setting.

In addition, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to all social housing providers on 19 November 2022, reminding them that all social housing must meet the Decent Homes Standard and urging them to undertake prompt action when tenants complain about damp and mould.

■ **Health: Screening**

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[126880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the adequacy of the number of scans and health checks completed by the NHS.

Will Quince:

Diagnostic checks, including scans, are a key part of many elective care pathways. The Department's ambition is that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic check receive it within six weeks by March 2025. According to data published in November 2022, approximately 73% are receiving a check within six weeks. Community Diagnostic Centres have delivered more than 2.7 million additional checks as of December 2022.

Delivery of the NHS Health Check programme, which is commissioned by local Government, was largely suspended between April 2020 and February 2022 due to the pandemic and in line with national guidance from NHS England. Data shows most local authorities have made positive steps to recover the service, reaching 81% of pre-pandemic activity between July and September 2022.

■ Heart Diseases

Jonathan Gullis: [\[126858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to improve survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest cases.

Jonathan Gullis: [\[126859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the availability of defibrillators across regions of the UK.

Jonathan Gullis: [\[126860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to increase the (a) provision of defibrillators and (b) number of people trained in (i) first aid and (ii) CPR.

Helen Whately:

To improve survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest cases, NHS England have assessed the benefits of providing Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in public places and have included improving bystander use of AEDs as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. The NHS Long Term Plan sets out that a national network of community first responders and AEDs will help save up to 4,000 lives each year by 2028.

No specific assessment has been made of the availability of defibrillators across regions of the United Kingdom. The treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease is a priority for the Government, access to defibrillators is an important part of that commitment and it recently agreed to provide funding of £1 million to design a grant scheme for the expansion of AEDs that expands publicly supported access to defibrillators. We will set out agreed criteria to ensure that the delivery of AEDs in the community is based on being accessible on a 24 hour seven days a week basis and are equitable both nationally and socially.

Working with St John Ambulance, 141 community advocates have been recruited to deliver sessions in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defibrillator use. As of December 2022, 163 sessions had been delivered and 3249 people had been reached by these advocates. The first responders programme also had a key involvement in restart a heart day.

■ Hospices: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[126719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the potential merits for a patient's care journey of increasing statutory funding for hospices.

Helen Whately:

Palliative and end of life care is commissioned locally by integrated care boards in response to the needs of their local population. Any assessment of patients' care

journeys, including whether to increase funding made available to palliative and end of life care providers, such as hospices, would therefore be made at a local level.

■ Hospitals: Construction

Karin Smyth:

[\[122470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the revised New Hospitals Programme to include the changes required to mandate only single patient rooms.

Will Quince:

The Department is working closely with National Health Service trusts, clinical experts and representative groups on the single rooms policy for new hospitals that are part of the New Hospital Programme. The proposal to mandate 100% single rooms for the New Hospital Programme has been endorsed by NHS England executive quality group and we are working closely with schemes in the programme on how this will apply to them.

A final decision on single rooms policy for future hospital infrastructure outside of the scope of the New Hospital Programme will be made by NHS England and the New Hospital Programme is working closely with NHS England technical standards teams on this. This will be published by NHS England in due course.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[126879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase the speed of hospital discharges.

Helen Whately:

On 9 January 2023, the Government committed a further £200 million to fund short-term National Health Service step-down care packages. Integrated care boards, working closely with local authorities, will use this to purchase places in care homes and other settings, such as hospices, as well as to help fund wrap-around primary and community health services to support patients' recovery. NHS England expect that this will allow an additional 2,500 – 3,000 patients to be discharged from hospital into other care settings, freeing up much needed acute beds and clinical capacity.

The Government has also provided an extra £50 million in capital funding to expand ambulance hubs and hospital discharge lounges to help improve the flow of patients through hospitals and the speed of hospital discharges. This complements and builds on the £500 million adult social care discharge fund announced in September 2022, which can be used to fund a much wider range of measures to support discharge, including domiciliary care packages and measures to boost workforce capacity.

Mr Peter Bone:

[\[127720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many medically fit patients have been waiting more than 14 days to be discharged in acute hospital settings as of 19 January.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ **Hyperactivity: Mental Health Services**

Dan Carden:

[\[128701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time for ADHD NHS treatment is.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 January 2023]: The information requested is not held centrally. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be treated using medicine or therapy, but a combination of both is often recommended. Treatment is usually arranged by a specialist, such as a paediatrician or psychiatrist, although the condition may be monitored by a general practitioner.

With respect to referral and treatment for ADHD, integrated care boards (ICBs) and National Health Service trusts should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline NG87: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: diagnosis and management. This guideline, published in September 2019, aims to improve the diagnosis of ADHD and the quality of care and support that people receive including access to medication. The guideline does not set out a timeframe within which medication for ADHD should be provided, but it does explain the key considerations for clinicians when deciding whether to offer medication.

It is the responsibility of ICBs to make available appropriate provision to meet the health and care needs of their local population. We are supporting them to expand mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24 so that an additional two million people can get the support they need.

■ **Hyperthermia: Older People**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[127818\]](#)

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

Will Quince:

This information is not held in the format requested. NHS Digital advise that since December 2021 there was a finished admission episode count of one adult aged 65

years old and over with a primary diagnosis of hyperthermia, and similarly 11 with a secondary diagnosis.

■ **Life Expectancy: Stockport**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[131362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the level of healthy life expectancy in Stockport constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Liver Cancer: Diagnosis**

Jim Shannon:

[\[126651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure early diagnosis of liver cancer.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 23 January 2023]: The National Cancer Programme is working to detect more hepatocellular carcinomas (HCC) at an early stage as part of the NHS Long Term Plan ambition to diagnose 75% cancers at an early stage by 2028.

Community Liver Health Checks are being funded in 12 areas to identify patients with liver disease earlier, with liver disease being the biggest risk factor of HCC. These pilots will ensure that more people at high risk of HCC are offered and receive six monthly liver surveillance by ultrasound.

■ **Liver Cancer: Health Services**

Jim Shannon:

[\[126653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a national audit of liver cancer services to address regional variations in care.

Helen Whately:

In 2021, the NHS England Cancer Programme undertook a strategic review of the cancer clinical audit portfolio, to ensure those cancers that would benefit the most from a clinical audit were prioritised. Liver cancer was taken into consideration during the selection process but was not proposed for an audit.

■ **Maternity Services: Contraceptives**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[130044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Women's Health Strategy published on 20 July 2022, what steps his Department plans to take to support local commissioners and providers with improving the provision of postnatal contraception in maternity settings.

Maria Caulfield:

We are committed to ensuring the public receive the best possible contraceptive services. The Women's Health Strategy includes examples of local areas providing contraception in maternity settings. It encourages local commissioners and providers to consider implementing these services to enable women to plan any subsequent pregnancies and reduce short inter-pregnancy intervals which are associated with poorer pregnancy outcomes. NHS England's general practitioner contract agreement 2020/21 to 2023/24 states that a universal six to eight week post-natal check for new mothers should include a focus on family planning and contraception issues.

■ **Mechanical Thrombectomy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[129875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet with (a) the Stroke Association and (b) experts in thrombectomy services to discuss the adequacy of access to mechanical thrombectomies.

Helen Whately:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced the development of a Major Condition Strategy, including stroke, with an interim report to be published this summer. About 8% of patients suffering from an ischemic stroke in England could benefit from a thrombectomy. There is strong evidence that, when used appropriately, thrombectomy significantly reduces the severity of disability caused by stroke. NHS England is committed to bringing about a tenfold increase in the delivery of mechanical thrombectomy.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Tim Loughton:**[\[122027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the correspondence from the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham of 6 September 2022 and 1 November 2022, for what reason (a) he will not meet Evusheld campaigners and (b) his correspondence of 15 December 2022 did not refer to the request for a meeting.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 19 January 2023]: On 15 December 2022, we wrote to patient groups and to MPs, to provide an update on COVID-19 treatments this winter. This correspondence did not refer to Evusheld campaigners' request for a meeting because the purpose of this letter was to provide an update on the Department's latest position on Evusheld. The Department has met with Evusheld campaigners on multiple occasions and appreciate their continued engagement.

■ Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell:

[129930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that integrated care systems have appropriate in-area, regulated mental health residential services available for patient use.

Maria Caulfield:

It is for integrated care systems to work with partner organisations to plan and make provision for services in their area, both within the National Health Service and with local authorities and help deliver more person-centred and preventative care, including supporting those with long-term conditions or mental health issues.

■ Mental Health Services: Children in Care

Rachael Maskell:

[129927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that children who enter the care system have the clinical mental health support they need (a) when entering and (b) throughout their time in that system.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education have published statutory guidance for local authorities, integrated commissioning boards (ICBs) and NHS England, Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked after children.

The guidance is clear that local authorities, ICBs and NHS England need to reflect the high level of mental health needs amongst looked after children in their strategic planning of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). They should ensure that CAMHS and other services provide targeted and dedicated support to looked-after children according to need. This could include a dedicated team or seconding a CAMHS professional into a looked-after children multi-agency team. Professionals need to work together with the child to assess and meet their mental health needs in a tailored way. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2>.

We are supporting ICBs to expand mental health services through the NHS Long Term Plan, which commits to increasing investment into mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24. As part of this investment, an additional 345,000 children and young people, including cared for children, will be able to access National Health Service funded mental health support.

We also provided an additional £79 million for 2021/22 to allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services.

■ Mental Health Services: Inspections**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[119245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral statement of 9 January 2023 on NHS winter pressures, how many Care Quality Commission inspections he expects to take place in inpatient mental health services during winter 2023; and within what time period those inspections will occur.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[119246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral statement of 9 January 2023 on NHS winter pressures, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of focusing Care Quality Commission inspections on inpatient mental health settings during winter 2023 on the discharge of patients from emergency departments to mental health settings.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 12 January 2023]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) issued a detailed statement on 24 January about how it will adjust its regulatory activity through the winter period. This means continuing to respond to the most serious risks in National Health Service organisations and continuing to conduct Mental Health Act monitoring visits to ensure that the rights of people detained under the act are protected. In the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's winter statement, mental health is used as an example of where any resources that are freed up from reduced inspections could be deployed. The CQC's inspections are risk based, and we would expect them to deploy any resource available in a way that reflects those risks.

■ Mental Health Services: Staff**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[119993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his oral statement of 9 January 2023, on NHS winter pressures, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of increasing Care Quality Commission inspections on staff availability for clinical work in inpatient mental health settings.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 16 January 2023]: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) issued a detailed statement on 24 January about how it will adjust its regulatory activity through the winter period. This means continuing to respond to the most serious risks in National Health Service organisations and continuing to conduct Mental Health Act monitoring visits to ensure that the rights of people detained under the act are protected. In the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's winter statement, mental health is used as an example of where any resources that are freed up from reduced inspections could be deployed. The CQC's inspections are risk based, and we would expect them to deploy any resource available in a way that reflects those risks.

■ Neurogenic Bowel Dysfunction: Medical Treatments

Andy McDonald:

[\[129837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that sufficient NHS staff are trained to provide (a) transanal irrigation, (b) digital rectal stimulation and (c) the digital removal of faeces for inpatients in NHS hospitals with neurogenic bowel dysfunction.

Will Quince:

Training for transanal irrigation, digital rectal stimulation and the digital removal of faeces for inpatients in National Health Service hospitals with neurogenic bowel dysfunction is the responsibility of individual NHS employers.

■ NHS: Agency Workers

Sarah Olney:

[\[121016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of NHS funding was spent on agency staff to fill staff shortages in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 16 January 2023]: The following table shows the agency spend in total for the years 2016/17 to 2020/21. Data for 2021/22 is not yet available.

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL EMPLOYEE PAYBILL	TOTAL AGENCY SPEND	AGENCY COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEE EXPENSES
2016/17	£50,619 million	£2,935 million	5.8%
2017/18	£52,302 million	£2,407 million	4.6%
2018/19	£54,968 million	£2,401 million	4.4%
2019/20	£60,840 million	£2,380 million	3.9%
2020/21	£67,700 million	£2,436 million	3.6%

The deployment of a temporary workforce is an important element of efficiently running the National Health Service, allowing the NHS to meet demand fluctuations without the need to increase capacity above that which would be required on a sustained basis. Staff can be drawn from internal staff banks or external agencies.

■ NHS: Buildings

Rachael Maskell:

[\[122170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the NHS estate for delivering healthcare needs; and what assessment he has made of areas in which the estate should be prioritised for upgrade.

Will Quince:

Individual National Health Service organisations are legally responsible for maintaining their estates. The Government has been clear that it expects NHS organisations to use existing capital budgets and assets to maximum effect.

At the Spending Review 2021, the Department backed the NHS with substantial operational capital investment for trusts to prioritise and deliver locally to maintain and refurbish their premises.

The Government is investing record sums to upgrade and modernise NHS buildings so staff have the facilities needed to provide world-class care for patients, including £4 billion this year and £12 billion over the next three years.

We remain committed to all schemes that have been announced as part of the New Hospital Programme, the biggest hospital building programme in a generation, as well as over 70 hospital upgrades across England.

■ **NHS: Management Consultants****Wes Streeting:**[\[121087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much from the public purse the NHS in England has spent on management consultants in each of the last five years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 18 January 2023]: The following table shows the expenditure on consultancy from 2017/18 to 2020/21 covering NHS England, NHS England group and NHS Provider Trusts. NHS Trusts are required to disclose expenditure on consultancy, but this cannot be broken down further into types of consultancy. The 2021/22 data is not yet available and will be published shortly.

ORGANISATION	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
NHS England	£13.6 million	£2.5 million	£8.7 million	£26.6 million
NHS England Group	£51.6 million	£45.8 million	£64.1 million	£85.5 million
NHS providers	£234.0 million	£199.4 million	£227.0 million	£247.5 million

Source:

NHS Commissioning Board Annual Report and Accounts for years 2020/21, 2019/20, 2018/19 and 2017/18. This includes expenditure by Commissioning Support Units but excludes Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

Consolidated NHS provider accounts for years 2020/21, 2019/20, 2018/19 and 2017/18. This covers both NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts.

■ NHS: Sick Leave

Matt Western:

[\[126764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff were off sick with stress-related illnesses in (a) 2012 and (b) 2022.

Will Quince:

Data on sickness absence is collected in the Electronic Staff Record, the human resources system for the National Health Service. Within this data it is not possible to specifically identify those recorded as absent due to 'stress'. This sits within wider categories of absence collected, therefore for 2012, 'stress-related' reasons include 'Other Mental Disorders', 'Psychological', 'Stress' and 'S10 Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses'. For 2021 and 2022, stress reasons include 'S10 Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses'. The following table below shows the full time equivalent (FTE) days lost for 'stress-related' illnesses in 2012, 2021 and 2022:

TYPE	2012	2021	2022 (JANUARY TO AUGUST)
FTE days available	384,901,520	467,978,005	319,962,005
FTE days lost due to all reasons	16,271,654	23,531,596	18,050,326
FTE days lost due to stress related reasons	2,846,280	6,214,112	3,992,109
Stress related sickness absence rate as a percentage of FTE days available	0.7%	1.3%	1.2%
Stress related sickness absence rate as a percentage of FTE days lost due to all reasons	17.5%	26.4%	22.1%
FTE days lost due to Unknown reasons	2,490,021	697,063	485,420

Source: NHS Digital Sickness Absence Data

Notes:

1. For 2012, stress reasons include 'Other Mental Disorders', 'Psychological', 'Stress' and 'S10 Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses'. For 2021 and 2022, stress reasons include 'S10 Anxiety/stress/depression/other psychiatric illnesses'.

2. 2022 only covers months of January to August 2022 as this is the latest data available at this time.
3. Part of the increase in FTE days lost by sickness absence reason may be attributable to the improvement in completion of sickness absence reason information by staff.

■ **NHS: Staff**

David Warburton:

[\[127861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) recruit and retain more permanent staff in the NHS and (b) reduce NHS reliance on agency staff.

Will Quince:

This Government is committed to growing the National Health Service workforce. We have record numbers of staff working in the NHS, including almost 4,700 more doctors and over 10,500 more nurses since last year. We are on track to meet the 50,000 nurses manifesto commitment and we have also funded 1,500 more medical school places each year to strengthen our workforce.

We also recognise the importance of retaining our experienced workforce. The NHS Retention Programme is helping to retain our experienced workforce through targeted interventions to support staff to stay, whilst keeping them well. The long term workforce plan currently being developed by NHS England will help ensure we have the right staff numbers with the right skills to deliver high quality services in the future.

A flexible workforce is important for running the NHS, to meet short term demand increases. This is done through staff banks and external agencies. Our policy is to reduce the use of agency spend and prioritise staff banks. Since 2015, we have controlled agency spend through price caps and procurement frameworks and have reduced agency spend by a third from £3.6 billion in 2015/16 to £2.4 billion in 2020/21

Alongside agency specific measures, the Government has worked with NHS trusts to develop their staff banks, including collaborative banks, which create a larger pool of flexible staff.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[129812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown by ethnicity and pay grade of (a) all staff, (b) professionally qualified clinical staff, (c) maternity staff and (d) midwives who work in the NHS in England (i) at the most recent point for which figures are available and (ii) in January 2018.

Will Quince:

NHS Digital collects and publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in National Health Service trusts and commissioning bodies, but not staff working in primary care or in general practice, local authorities or other providers.

Data on the NHS workforce is drawn from the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). ESR is the Human Resource and payroll system for the NHS. Data on the headcount of HCHS staff by ethnicity and pay grade for December 2017 and September 2022 is attached. Data is published quarterly and as such December 2017 is the closest point to the requested January 2018 data. The latest data available is at September 2022.

Maternity services staff have been defined as doctors working in the speciality of obstetrics and gynaecology and other professionally qualified clinical staff (midwives and nurses) and clinical support staff working in the care setting of maternity services or neonatal nursing (including special care baby units).

Attachments:

1. Attachment [FORMATTED PQ129812 - HCHS staff by grade and ethnicity for specified staff groups_Dec17_Sep22 (1).xlsx]

■ **NHS: Strikes**

Rachael Maskell:

[126709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill and the current practice of NHS staff leaving a picket line voluntarily to support a clinical emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

Where strikes have happened, in most cases union representatives have agreed derogations from industrial action where care is urgent or time critical. This means, that we can be confident that category 1 ambulance calls will be responded to. The Government remains concerned, however, that in some instances these voluntary agreements have not been agreed until the last minute, have not gone far enough, or there has been confusion about what has been agreed. In a small number of cases staff have taken strike action even if they work in an area that is meant to be derogated.

The Government is bringing forward the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. In putting minimum service levels in legislation, the public will have the much-needed assurance that urgent and time critical care will always continue through strike action, and employers will be better able to plan for strike action.

■ **Nurses: Industrial Disputes**

Afzal Khan:

[117830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Royal College of Nursing on nurses industrial action.

Will Quince:

My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, and I, met representatives from the Royal College of Nursing several times towards the end of 2022.

Most recently, the Secretary of State wrote to representatives of health unions early in January to invite them to meet to discuss the evidence that the Government will be submitting to the Pay Review Bodies for the 2023-24 pay round. RCN representatives were present at meetings on 9 January and 12 January.

The Government is focused on the 2023-24 pay review process but recognises that despite over one million National Health Service workers receiving a pay rise of at least £1,400 this financial year, global economic headwinds are putting household budgets under pressure, and we are happy to listen to concerns from health unions about this.

■ Ophthalmic Services

Peter Dowd: [\[129907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans for all NHS commissioners to allow primary care optometrists to provide Minor Eye Care Services across England.

Peter Dowd: [\[129908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of rolling out optometrist-led Minor Eye Care Services to all integrated care systems.

Peter Dowd: [\[129910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure primary care optometrists are used effectively to help relieve the caseload of general practice.

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 how eye care services should be commissioned for the future, this includes considering a greater role for primary eye care providers.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Glaucoma

Peter Dowd: [\[129909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the contribution of primary care optometrists in the detection and treatment of sight loss as a result of glaucoma.

Neil O'Brien:

Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners play a vital role in the early detection of glaucoma, which is usually diagnosed through a sight test. Free National Health Service sight tests are available for many, including individuals diagnosed

with, or at risk of glaucoma. Patients with suspected glaucoma will be referred for further investigation and any clinically necessary treatment.

Integrated care boards are able to commission out of hospital services from primary eye care providers to meet local needs. This could include undertaking further tests on patients with suspected glaucoma to identify those that require referral into the hospital eye service, and the ongoing monitoring of selected glaucoma patients.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Waiting Lists

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[128714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle ophthalmology waiting list backlogs.

Neil O'Brien:

In the Autumn Statement the Department committed to an additional £3.3 billion per year until 2024/25 to respond to significant pressures facing the National Health Service. This is on top of the £8 billion already committed until 2025 to reduce waiting times across specialisms, including for ophthalmology.

To support providers the NHS Outpatients Recovery and Transformation programme has introduced initiatives to improve ophthalmology services, including developing guidance to support with the clinical prioritisation of waiting lists and implementation guidance for specialist advice and guidance in ophthalmology.

Furthermore, the Government committed an additional £1.5 billion at the Spending Review 2021 to expand surgical hubs to reduce the elective backlog, which includes delivering high volume low complexity ophthalmology surgical services supported by Getting It Right First-Time team.

NHS England are also redesigning eye-care pathways to reduce variation and improve performance across surgery, diagnostics, and outpatients. This will ensure patients are seen faster in the right place, by the right person, through fewer appointments and by providing effective support.

■ Palantir: Contracts

Chi Onwurah:

[\[129798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Palantir Technologies has provided services to NHS organisations.

Will Quince:

Palantir provides NHS England with a software platform, Foundry, for the processing of data, sourced and used for the COVID-19 pandemic to help resource planning and improve patient care. NHS England has extended the contract for this, via G-Cloud, until June 2023. The Department does not hold information on the contracts awarded by local National Health Service organisations.

■ Palliative Care

Rachael Maskell:

[\[126716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Health and Care Act 2022, what progress he has made on implementing comprehensive palliative care for all patients who require that service.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards have a legal duty to commission palliative and end of life care services that meet the needs of their local population. To support systems in implementing the Health and Care Act 2022, NHS England has made available a number of resources including statutory guidance, a supporting handbook and service specifications for both adults and children and young people.

■ Palliative Care: Home Care Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[126718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps he is taking to ensure that all patients who require hospice services at home are able to receive that service.

Helen Whately:

Palliative and end of life care services are commissioned locally, with NHS England publishing statutory guidance to support commissioners with implementation of the Health and Care Act 2022. The guidance includes explicit reference to community approaches and service provision in community settings.

■ Psilocybin

Crispin Blunt:

[\[R\] \[126510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the paper entitled Single-Dose Psilocybin for a Treatment-Resistant Episode of Major Depression, published in 2022, if he will ask the Chief Medical Officer to assess the (a) medicinal and (b) therapeutic utility of psilocybin.

Will Quince:

As it says in the conclusion of the paper “Larger and longer trials, including comparison with existing treatments, are required to determine the efficacy and safety of psilocybin for this disorder.” When new treatments are sufficiently developed, there are existing mechanisms in the United Kingdom to licence those treatments and determine their cost effectiveness and use. These are the correct routes to follow, once the evidence is sufficiently developed.

■ **Psychiatric Patients: Out of Area Treatment**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[129853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many mental health inpatients have been placed in inappropriate out of area placements in the past 12 months.

Maria Caulfield:

The latest available information from November 2021 to October 2022 published by NHS Digital, indicates that 3,680 inappropriate out of area placements were started in adult mental health services covering the following three acute bed types, adult mental health care, older adult mental health care (organic and functional) and psychiatric intensive care unit, due to the unavailability of a bed. Data for July to October 2022 may have been affected by a cyber incident in a handful of data providers, but the impact of this is believed to be limited.

■ **Psychiatric Patients: Private Sector**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[129854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of safety of mental health NHS inpatients in private hospitals rated as inadequate or requires improvement by the Care Quality Commission.

Maria Caulfield:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. Its remit is to monitor, inspect, assess and regulate services to ensure all patients receive the best level of safety and quality of care. The CQC assess service providers against the fundamental standards of care. Where it finds the safety and quality of care does not meet those standards, it will use its enforcement powers to hold provider to account and drive improvement. CQC also work with stakeholders across the health and care landscape to ensure adequate support is available to help providers improve.

■ **Public Health: Finance**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[125284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of funding of the public health grant to local authorities.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: At the Spending Review 2021, we considered the need for local authority public health funding and confirmed that the public health grant to local authorities would increase over the settlement period. In 2022/23, the grant increased by 2.81% to £3.417 billion. This is in addition to targeted investment through local Government in start for life support and drug and alcohol treatment services.

We will announce 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly and in doing so will consider the impact of changes to pay and inflation trends and forecasts since the Spending Review.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[126800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make assessment of the effect of excluding (a) the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment, (b) the care component of DLA, (c) Attendance Allowance and (d) disability premiums in social security means-tested benefits from income for the purpose of charging for care in community on (i) the quality of life and incomes levels among social care recipients, including people with disabilities of working age with high support needs and (ii) local authority budgets.

Helen Whately:

There are no plans to make a specific assessment. When charging a person for care outside of a care home, domiciliary care, a local authority has more discretion in how it charges to enable it to take account of local practices and innovations. Where disability-related benefits are taken into account, the local authority should make an assessment and allow the person to keep enough benefit to pay for necessary disability-related expenditure to meet any needs which are not being met by the local authority.

■ Social Services: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[127901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Oral Statement on NHS Winter Pressures on Monday 9 January 2023, how much of the announced £200 million additional Discharge Funding has been received by (a) care home providers and (b) domiciliary care providers as of 19 January 2023.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: The £200 million discharge funding announced on 9 January is held centrally by NHS England and allocated to integrated care boards (ICBs). These allocations were published on 13 January. ICBs lead on the procurement and purchasing of this additional capacity, working closely with local authorities, in line with local need. ICBs will be reimbursed by NHS England based on their actual spend up to the level of the capped budget. As such, the Department is not directly distributing money to providers.

■ Spinal Injuries

Andy McDonald:

[\[129840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people living with a spinal cord injury in England.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Surgery: Virtual Reality**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[126604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has the Department made of the potential merits of using the software platform Proximie during surgical procedures.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made. Proximie has been used by Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust to help surgeons give instructions about a procedure to surgical colleagues at another hospital, during an operation, by marking procedural annotations and instructions on the screen of their tablet, computer, mobile phone. It was also used to during the COVID-19 pandemic to help limit the number of people in an operating theatre without reducing the clinical expertise.

The National Health Service artificial intelligence (AI) lab was created in 2019 to enable the adoption of safe, effective and ethical AI technologies to improve the quality of care and productivity. The AI Lab has provided more than £100 million to 77 of the most promising AI technologies to accelerate the evaluation and deployment of AI in the NHS in collaboration with the health and care sector and industry and technology leaders.

■ **Terminal Illnesses: Mental Health Services and Religion**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[126722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will put additional support in place for patients who receive a terminal or life changing diagnosis to address their (a) psychological and (b) spiritual needs.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are required to commission appropriate palliative and end of life care services to meet the needs of their population. There is a range of guidance in place for local systems and health and care staff to enable them to provide support to those with a terminal or life changing diagnosis, including addressing psychological and spiritual needs.

■ **Vaccination: Babies**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[129866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure access to infant immunisations at eight weeks of age.

Maria Caulfield:

Immunisations for babies at eight weeks are routinely delivered by general practitioner (GP) practices, who take responsibility for improving immunisation access by communicating key information on vaccinations through the practice website and their leaflets, in addition to NHS England updating their central website. NHS England also proactively invite families and carers to immunisation appointments and encourage healthcare providers to take every opportunity to promote the importance of infant immunisation through midwife contact, health visitors and the routine six-week post-birth check.

The Department encourages those who have missed their immunisation offer to catch-up via their GP and for anyone unsure of their vaccination status or eligibility, to contact their GP for advice.

■ Vaccination: Publicity**Wes Streeting:**[\[122483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what her Department's budget was for public information campaigns to promote immunisation in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 January 2023]: In 2021/22 the Department ran an integrated immunisations campaign to promote uptake of seasonal flu and COVID-19 booster vaccinations which had a media spend of £11.5 million.

In 2022/23 the Department ran two immunisations campaigns, one integrated campaign to promote uptake of seasonal flu and COVID-19 booster vaccinations which had a media spend of £3.02 million and one promoting uptake of childhood vaccination with a media spend of £334,116.

■ Visual Impairment**Peter Dowd:**[\[129911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce levels of (a) glaucoma and (b) preventable sight loss in England.

Neil O'Brien:

Prevention, early detection and access to timely treatment are all key to preventing sight loss. Free National Health Service sight tests are available to children, those aged 60 years old and over, individuals on low incomes, and those at increased risk of certain eye diseases, including glaucoma. Diabetic Retinopathy screening is also offered annually to individuals aged 12 years old or over with diabetes.

Furthermore, the Government has well established programmes on reducing smoking and obesity, both long terms risk factors for sight loss. The Government also recognises that research is crucial for improving outcomes for patients with sight threatening conditions. Over the past five financial years, the National Institute for Health and Care Research has invested more than £100 million in funding and support for eye conditions research, many of the studies specifically focus on sight

loss. NHS England's transformation programme is also considering how eye care services should be commissioned for the future, which will improve access to care and patient outcomes.

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Seema Malhotra:

[\[126660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the effectiveness of the community trigger mechanism in resolving incidents of prolonged anti-social behaviour.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[126661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve levels of support and advocacy for victims of anti-social behaviour who have chosen to activate the community trigger mechanism.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and the wider community.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (the '2014 Act') gives the police, local councils, and other frontline agencies a range of tools and powers to tackle ASB. This includes the Community Trigger, which gives victims of persistent anti-social behaviour the ability to demand a formal case review, where a locally defined threshold is met, in order to determine whether there is further action which can be taken. The threshold must be no higher than three qualifying complaints of anti-social behaviour in a six-month period.

The Home Office published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of these powers. The guidance sets out the importance of focusing on the needs of the victim and the local community, as well as ensuring that the relevant legal tests are met. This guidance was updated in June 2022 to ensure a victim-centered approach to tackling ASB as well as stronger use of the powers and tools in the 2014 Act. We also updated the guidance specifically on the Community Trigger in July 2022.

In July 2022, we published the [ASB principles](#) which will help to deliver a consistent approach to understanding and addressing ASB in local communities.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy the powers in the 2014 Act depending on the specific circumstances. They are best placed to understand what is driving the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

We want PCCs to be in a stronger position to challenge local agencies, align local ASB strategies to their Police and Crime Plan work with Community Safety Partnerships to deliver the best outcome for ASB victims. We also want PCCs to have a role clearly set out in relation to the Community Trigger to give them more power to scrutinise and improve its operation. We are working closely with our partners and intend to implement the ASB specific recommendations through the Community Safety Partnership Review.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[129969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to remove the owner of a property who is engaging in anti-social behaviour and causing harm to neighbours whilst living in that property.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and the wider community.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides 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 anti-social behaviour. However, these powers cannot be used to remove the owner of a property who is engaging in ASB.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy the powers in the 2014 Act depending on the specific circumstances. They are best placed to understand what is driving the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

The Home Office published statutory guidance to support local areas to make effective use of these powers. The guidance sets out the importance of focusing on the needs of the victim and the local community, as well as ensuring that the relevant legal tests are met. This guidance was updated in June 2022 to ensure a victim-centered approach to tackling ASB as well as stronger use of the powers and tools in the 2014 Act.

■ Asylum and Visas: Iran

Caroline Lucas:

[\[127732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he is taking steps to increase the (a) speed and (b) quality of (i) visa and (ii) asylum application decision-making for applications made by people from Iran.

Robert Jenrick:

All Visa and asylum claims are considered on a case-by-case basis and in line with published policy.

In respect of overseas visa applications, UK Visas and Immigration operate within both global customer service standards and global decision quality practices for all of

its customers who make an entry clearance application from overseas. Details of current performance against these customer service standards:

Latest processing times : Global average processing times for applications made outside the UK:

[Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk)

Latest processing times : Global average processing times for applications made inside the UK

[Visa decision waiting times: applications inside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-inside-the-uk)

Asylum Claims by Iranian nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality.

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

To further accelerate decision making we will drive productivity improvements by simplifying and modernising our system. This includes measures like shorter, more focussed interviews; removing unnecessary interviews; making guidance simpler and more accessible; dealing with cases more swiftly where they can be certified as manifestly unfounded; recruiting extra decision makers; and allocating dedicated resources for different nationalities

■ Asylum: Children

Seema Malhotra:

[129806]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to establish an inquiry into missing unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

Robert Jenrick:

The safety and wellbeing of those in our care is our primary concern. We have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in emergency interim hotels are safe and supported whilst we seek urgent placements with a local authority. Young people are supported by team leaders and support workers who are on site 24 hours a day. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of specialist social workers and nurses.

We have no power to detain unaccompanied asylum seeking children in hotels and we know some do go missing. Many of those who have gone missing are subsequently traced and located. Children's movements in and out of hotels are monitored and recorded and they are accompanied by support workers when attending organised activities and social excursions off-site, or where specific vulnerabilities are identified.

When a young person goes missing the 'missing persons protocol' is followed and led by our directly engaged social workers. A multi-agency, missing persons protocol is mobilised alongside the police and local authorities, to establish their whereabouts and to ensure that they are safe

Regarding an inquiry; the Home Secretary is taking advice from officials and considering the appropriate next steps.

■ **Asylum: Iran**

Caroline Lucas:

[127731]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims from Iranian (a) women and (b) nationals are outstanding; and how many and what proportion of those claims have been outstanding for more than (i) six months, (ii) one year and (iii) three years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum and resettlement in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum claims awaiting an initial decision are published in table Asy_D03 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to 30 September 2022.

The published data is broken down by claims awaiting a decision for (i) 6 months or less and (ii) more than 6 months, and by nationality. The published data is not broken down by sex.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ **Asylum: Sussex**

Hilary Benn:

[129729]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the number of asylum seeker children who were in Home Office-procured hotels in Sussex have disappeared without notifying anyone in the past 12 months.

Robert Jenrick:

We take the welfare of those in our care extremely seriously. We have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in emergency interim hotels are safe and supported whilst we seek urgent placements with a local authority. Young people are supported by team leaders and support workers who are on site 24 hours a day. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of specialist social workers and nurses.

The Home Office has no power to hold asylum seekers, including children, in hotels or any temporary accommodation if they wish to leave. All Home Office staff and contractors engaging with asylum seekers are trained to adopt a risk-based approach towards potential indications of vulnerability and to refer relevant cases onto the Safeguarding Hub, a dedicated resource assigned to identifying and safeguarding vulnerable asylum seekers.

We have a central record of young people who have gone missing from UASC hotels and so have the details of these specific young people and the details of their missing

incident. When any child goes missing, a multi-agency, missing persons protocol is mobilised, and many of those who have gone missing are subsequently traced and located. The Home Office is also notified about any asylum-seeking children who went missing from adult/family hotels by the accommodation provider and therefore we would have the data regarding them, which is recorded on their individual records rather than centrally.

■ **Asylum: Temporary Accommodation**

Damien Moore: [130016]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has a timescale for informing Members of Parliament on decisions on new asylum accommodation sites within their constituencies after these have been decided within her Department.

Robert Jenrick:

An announcement of any potential use of a site would involve collaborative and in-depth discussions regarding the accommodation and what services might be required within that Council and other government departments to inform decision making.

■ **Business: Burglary**

Jim Shannon: [126645]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what specific steps she is taking to help tackle the burglary of businesses.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises the impact crimes such as burglary can have on individuals, businesses and the wider community.

The Home Office is working with the National Police Chiefs' Council to encourage forces to learn from each other and share best practice, and in June 2022 NPCC launched the Burglary Power App to help officers gather evidence and investigate burglaries.

The Home Office works closely with the police-led National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) to understand the crimes affecting businesses and help ensure businesses and police are working effectively together. A crime prevention guidance is available for businesses on [Police.uk](https://www.police.uk), including information on protecting businesses from burglary.

To ensure police forces have sufficient resources to respond to the challenges they face we have committed to recruit an extra 20,000 police officers by March 2023, with over 15,343 already in place at the end of September 2022.

■ **Cannabis: Medical Treatments**

Crispin Blunt: [R] [129719]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she made if the implications for her policies of the findings of the report by the APPG on CBD

products entitled Plan for a Legal and Regulated UK Hemp and Cannabis Sector, published on 29 July 2022, on (a) the potential effect of reviewing CBD legislation on urban and rural job creation and tax income for the Government and (b) the potential effect on the CBD industry of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs proposals for the dosage threshold of 50 micrograms of controlled phytocannabinoids per unit of consumption, made to her Department by that body on 17 December 2021.

Chris Philp:

No specific assessment has been made of the implications of the APPG CBD report on the potential effects on employment and taxation of a review of CBD legislation.

In January 2021, the Home Office wrote to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) seeking the Council's advice on how we can strengthen the law on consumer CBD products.

This followed concerns that some CBD products being sold for human consumption may contain THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), a controlled drug compound found within the cannabis plant, making these products likely to be unlawful.

The ACMD published their report on 17 December 2021, recommending changes to the law. We are in the process of considering their findings and the Government will respond in due course.

■ **Forensic Archive**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[127699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to maintain Forensic Archive Limited's forensic archive.

Chris Philp:

There are no plans to change the way the Forensic Archive Ltd. operates.

■ **HM Passport Office: Refunds**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[121060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests for reimbursement were received by HM Passport Office in 2022; and how much was paid out in (a) December 2022 and (b) 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

His Majesty's Passport Office will reimburse its customers for a variety of reasons.

Reimbursements may be made automatically, or on consideration of a customer's request. Data about the number of reimbursements requested is not held in a reportable format.

For the calendar year 2022 there were 80,392 reimbursements made totalling £4,327,307.76.

For the period 1 December 2022 to 31 December 2022 there were 5,726 reimbursements made, totalling £413,313.34.

■ Home Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**Emily Thornberry:**[\[129735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2022 to Question 97490 on Home Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution, how many transactions were made using Travel and Expenses cards against the Home Office budget in 2021; and how many of these were (a) above and (b) below £500.

Chris Philp:

TRAVEL AND EXPENSES CARD TRANSACTIONS	TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS 2021
Above £500	10
Under £500	49,062
Grand Total	49,072

■ Home Office: Minimum Wage**Chris Stephens:****[R]** [\[129899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Chris Philp:

There are no employees within the Home Office that are paid at the National Minimum/Living Wage. All employees have an hourly rate above £9.50 per hour.

■ Homew Office: Written Questions**David Linden:**[\[130049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 January 2023 to Question 114859 on Members: Correspondence, and with reference to the email of 19 January 2023 from the UK Visas and Immigration MP Account Management Ministerial Team to the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference MPAM/0485222/22, when she plans to issue a correction to the Answer given to Question 114859.

Robert Jenrick:

A correction was issued on 25 January 2023.

■ Human Trafficking: English Channel**Yvette Cooper:**[\[128604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Joint Investigation Teams are currently in place to investigate people smuggling across the Channel by organised crime groups.

Yvette Cooper: [\[128605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many joint investigations have been opened into people smuggling by organised crime groups in (a) the past 12 months and (b) each of the past five years.

Yvette Cooper: [\[128606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many National Crime Agency staff are currently in roles tasked primarily with the disruption of (a) organised immigration crime and (b) people smuggling across the English Channel.

Yvette Cooper: [\[128607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many National Crime Agency staff are posted to (a) Belgium (b) Germany and (c) Netherlands.

Yvette Cooper: [\[128608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of organised crime groups active in facilitating people smuggling across the English Channel.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government is resolute in its commitment to tackle Organised Immigration Crime (OIC).

Tackling people smuggling of all types is a priority for Immigration Enforcement, working through its international network upstream as well as conducting OIC investigations within the UK. Additionally, the dedicated multi-agency OIC Taskforce, led by the National Crime Agency, is committed to dismantling OCGs engaged in immigration crime internationally. The Taskforce is active in 17 countries worldwide, and its activities include supporting judicial and intelligence capacity building in source and transit countries, and intelligence sharing in key near Europe countries. The NCA undertakes investigations into complex and serious OIC offences, arresting offenders in the UK and overseas and bringing them to justice.

In addition to the Taskforce, the NCA has a network in excess of 140 International Liaison Officers (ILOs) based in more than 45 locations, covering over 100 countries. For operational security reasons, the NCA does not disclose those countries in which NCA Liaison Officers are based. The NCA also has intelligence and investigative teams that are deployed across the full range of Serious and Organised Crime threats, where tackling Organised Immigration Crime is a priority.

The NCA overseas liaison officers network works with international partners and coordinates UK law enforcement overseas to gather intelligence, conduct operational activity (through agreement with partners) and enhance international delivery through a variety of means, including capacity building, training, joint European or international taskforces. The Liaison Officer network also includes officers based in the multilateral institutions of Europol and INTERPOL.

The tragedy in the Channel last December sadly demonstrates the extent to which OCGs endanger migrants' lives at sea. The NCA, Home Office, Ministry of Defence and UK police forces continue to collaborate with French counterparts to tackle the criminals behind the majority of these crossing attempts and protect lives at sea. Our joint efforts are resulting in continued arrests and prosecutions of these criminals, so that we deter, disrupt and dismantle the networks responsible for facilitating many of these crossings.

Joint Investigation Teams are another part of our toolkit to address cross border organised crime. JITs provide a legal framework for investigation teams set up for a fixed period between two or more countries to investigate a specific cross-border case. The UK participates in multiple JITs with an Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) dimension; however, for operational reasons we cannot provide further detail.

We also share information about criminality around small boats between international agencies. The UK-France Joint Intelligence Cell (known to France as the *Unité de renseignement opérationnel*, so URO or JIC) consists of UK and French officials, as well as a Europol embed, who collate and analyse operational intelligence to prevent crossings and to dismantle the gangs behind them. Since the JIC was established in July 2020, 59 organised criminal groups involved in small boats crossings in France have been dismantled. Our joint activity with the French saw nearly 400 arrests made in 2022 alone.

We also pursue those involved in the financial flows that support this activity. Using criminal powers in the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, an individual can be prosecuted for money laundering offences if sufficient evidence is obtainable and CPS agree to charging, or civil powers within the same act permit the action to be taken against the money concerned. Both these approaches are used to undermine the financial flows supporting small boat and wider clandestine smuggling, both in the UK and with foreign partners.

■ Knives: Crime

Tom Hunt:

[\[126821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support the police with preventing knife crime.

Chris Philp:

Tackling knife crime is a priority and the Government is determined to crack down on the scourge of violence devastating our communities.

The Government is supporting the police every step of the way in this effort. including through the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers and increased police funding.

The Government is proposing a total police funding settlement of up to £17.2 billion in 2023/24, an increase of up to £287 million when compared to 2022/23. Assuming full take up of precept flexibility, overall police funding available to PCCs will increase by up to £523 million (3.6% in cash terms) next year.

Suffolk Police's funding will be up to £157.0m in 2023/24, an increase of up to £6.1m when compared to 2022/23.

15,343 additional uplift officers have been recruited in England and Wales through the Police Uplift Programme, 77% of the target of 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, as at 30 September 2022. Suffolk Constabulary has recruited 128 additional uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 179 officers, as at 30 September 2022.

The Government has made £130m available this financial year (22/23) to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes:

- £64m for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which bring together local partners to tackle the drivers of violence in their area. VRUs are delivering a range of early intervention and prevention programmes to divert people away from a life of crime. They have reached over 260,000 vulnerable young people in their second year alone.
- Our £30m 'Grip' programme operates in these same 20 areas as VRUs and is helping to drive down violence by using a highly data-driven process to identify violence hotspots – often to individual street level – and target operational activity in those areas. In 2020, a 90 day trial of this approach in Southend resulted in an overall fall in violence in the hotspots of around 30% over the period of the trial.

The combination of these two programmes has prevented an estimated 49,000 violent offences in their first two years of activity.

The Government is also supporting the work of the police with new legislation. Knife Crime Prevention Orders have been requested by the police to help steer those most at risk away from serious violence. They are being piloted by the Metropolitan Police in London before they are rolled out more widely.

Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) were introduced in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and will give the police powers to take a more proactive approach and make it easier to target those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences, giving them the automatic right to search these offenders. SVROs will be piloted in the Sussex, West Midlands, Merseyside and Thames Valley Police areas before a decision is made on national rollout.

The Government also continues to encourage police forces to undertake a series of coordinated national weeks of action to tackle knife crime under Operation Sceptre. The operation includes targeted stop and searches, weapon sweeps of hotspot areas, surrender of knives, including through amnesty bins, test purchases of knives from retailers, and educational events. The latest phase of the operation took place between 14 to 20 November 2022. Officers seized 653 knives, and 6380 were either surrendered or seized during sweeps.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Kevin Foster:

[\[129947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 122475 on Members: Correspondence, if her Department will respond to unanswered correspondence of 5 December 2022 from the hon. Member for Torbay, reference KF22583.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office will respond shortly.

■ **Migrant Workers: Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[\[126876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people from (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the Republic of Ireland have applied to the Frontier Worker scheme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on the number of applications for the Frontier Worker permit, broken down by nationality, are published in table Vis_D01 of the entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed dataset. Data for the Frontier Worker permit can be selected using the 'Frontier Worker' visa type subgroup.

The Home Office does not publish data on Frontier Worker permits by country of residence, and so data is not available on Frontier Worker permits issued to persons normally resident in the Republic of Ireland.

■ **MV Empire Windrush**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[130070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to allocate (a) funds and (b) other resources for celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the MV Empire Windrush in Britain.

Robert Jenrick:

DLUHC is the lead Government department for Windrush Celebratory events and DLUHC officials are further exploring what else we can do to make even more of an impact for these celebrations. Further funding will be allocated to further developing an educational component on the National Windrush Monument website, in time for National Windrush Day 2023 and the 75th anniversary celebrations.

The 75th anniversary of the arrival of MV Empire Windrush at the Port of Tilbury marks a seminal moment in our nation's shared history. £750,000 in grant funding will be provided by government for the Windrush Day Grant Scheme to celebrate Windrush 75. Community groups and local authorities in England and Northern Ireland can apply for up to £50,000 for events and activities that mark the annual Windrush Day on 22 June.

As of today, HM Government has dedicated £3.75 million in funding toward honouring the Windrush legacy. This includes £2.75 million across five years of the Windrush Day Grant Scheme, and £1 million allocated to the National Windrush Monument.

■ Police: Disciplinary Proceedings

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[127744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing measures to enable former police officers to continue to face disciplinary inquiries by the Independent Office for Police Conduct if evidence emerges after their retirement.

Chris Philp:

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced provisions enabling the bringing of disciplinary proceedings against former police officers, notwithstanding their departure from the force

Any former officer who receives a disciplinary sanction that they would have been dismissed, had they still been serving, is placed on the police Barred List preventing them from re-joining policing in the future.

■ Police: Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences

James Wild:

[\[126841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement of 17 January on Police Conduct and David Carrick, Official Report, column 179, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring that an outside police force investigates the cases involving Metropolitan officers and staff accused of domestic violence or sexual abuse.

Chris Philp:

Domestic abuse and sexual violence are devastating crimes and victims should have confidence that all reports are taken seriously and cases handled effectively.

Any allegation of serious assault or sexual offences must, by law, be referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) under the mandatory referral criteria.

In July 2022, HMICFRS, the IOPC and the College of Policing published their report into a super-complaint about the police response to police-perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA). The report recommends that all forces ensure PPDA allegations are investigated by someone with no prior connection to any of those involved in the allegations. The NPCC has since confirmed that all forces have accepted relevant recommendations in the report.

■ Police: North Yorkshire

Rachael Maskell:

[127825]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of police conduct cases in North Yorkshire; and what steps she is taking in response to those cases.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes annual statistics on police misconduct, broken down at force-level here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-misconduct-statistics>

On 17 January 2023, the Home Secretary launched a Home Office review into the process of police officer dismissals, to ensure that the system is fair and effective at removing officers who are not fit to serve. This will include:

- An understanding of decision-making at misconduct hearings and accelerated hearings; and
- Any trends in the use of misconduct sanctions – including dismissals.

■ Police: Vetting

Rachael Maskell:

[127826]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tighten the vetting procedures for (a) police officers and (b) police community support officers; and if she take steps to require that their records should be reviewed annually.

Chris Philp:

The government recognises significant concerns which have been raised around police vetting. In response, the Home Secretary has asked the College of Policing to strengthen the statutory code of practice for police vetting, making the obligations all forces must legally follow stricter and clearer.

The Government has also commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to conduct a rapid review of all forces' response to the inspectorate's recent report into vetting and counter-corruption. This will make sure Chief Officers are taking the necessary action to remove those who are not fit to serve.

The report from HMICFRS recommends reducing the interval period between vetting renewals which we expect will be addressed by the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). The NPCC has also confirmed that it will ask all police forces to check their officers and staff against national police databases. This will help identify anyone who has slipped through the net before vetting standards were toughened and ensure those who are unfit to serve can be rooted out.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Change of Use

Damien Moore: [\[130015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received representations from local authorities on the ability of those authorities to refuse leaseholders from engaging in a change-of-use of a site from holiday to asylum accommodation, in the context of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office, and wider government, works closely with Local Authorities to discuss proposed accommodation sites in their area. Each potential site will have its own property and planning requirements which must be complied with, this will depend on the site.

■ Visas: Africa

Chi Onwurah: [\[126633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa application centres have (a) opened and (b) permanently closed in African countries since January 2019.

Chi Onwurah: [\[126635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whatever Visa Decision Making Centres are (a) open and (b) fully operational in (i) Abuja, (ii) Accra, (iii) Lagos and (iv) Nairobi.

Chi Onwurah: [\[126637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether scanning facilities are available in all visa application centres.

Robert Jenrick:

Since 2019, one UK Visa Application Centre (VAC) has opened in Africa, in Khartoum, Sudan. No VAC has permanently closed in Africa between January 2019 to present.

VACs in Abuja, Lagos, Accra and Nairobi are currently open and fully operational with a five-day service. There are no Visa Decision Making centres in those locations, the only Visa Decision Making Centre in Africa is in Pretoria.

VACs overseas are operated by VFS or TLS on behalf of UKVI. Document Scanning Assistance is available in all VACs operated by TLS and 125 of the 131 VACs operated by VFS.

■ Visas: Care Workers and Health Professions

Gareth Thomas: [\[127685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the average wait time for the processing of Health and Care Worker visas for those waiting to fulfil vacancies to work in the NHS in each of the last 5 years; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[127686]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average wait time is for the processing of an extension to Health and Care Worker visas for those working in the NHS in each of the last 5 years; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[127687]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to expedite Health and Care Worker visas for people with jobs secured in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[127688]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she will take to expedite the process of extensions of Health and Care Worker visas for people already working in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[127689]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on speeding up the processing of Health and Care Worker visas for those people roles in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[127690]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of time taken to (a) process Health and Care Worker visas for people offered NHS roles and (b) extend Health and Care Worker visas for people currently working in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not routinely publish details of average processing times and they do not form part of any current transparency data. However, information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data, at: [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data)

Health and Care visa extensions already benefit from a 15 working day service standard from the point of biometric submission, instead of the standard 8 weeks.

■ Visas: Charities

Ian Murray:

[127738]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for International Agreement Visas (Temporary Work), formerly known as Tier 5 Visas, were received from nationals from EU countries and from non-EU countries seeking to volunteer for charities in the UK as international volunteers in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 21–2022.

Ian Murray:

[127739]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many nationals from EU countries and from non-EU countries were granted International Agreement Visas (Temporary Work), formerly known as Tier 5 Visas, to volunteer for charities in the UK as international volunteers in (a) 2020-2021, and (b) 2021-2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on Entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of applications and grants for International Agreement visas (formerly Tier 5) are published in Vis_D01 and Vis_D02, respectively, of the [Entry clearance visas applications and outcomes detailed dataset](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

The latest data relates up to and including September 2022. Please note that the data cannot be disaggregated by employer or occupation.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

Ian Murray:

[127740]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total amount paid was for immigration health surcharges by people granted International Agreement Visas (Temporary Work), formerly known as Tier 5 Visas, to volunteer for charities in the UK as international volunteers in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not routinely publish data on immigration health surcharges broken down by visa routes.

JUSTICE

■ Community Orders

Steve Reed:

[125371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders completed community sentences in each local justice area since 2010.

Steve Reed:

[125372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many community sentences were issued in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

Information on the number of individuals that a community sentence was issued to, on a principal offence, principal disposal basis, can be found across the following data tools:

- Source 1: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022](#) (July 2017 to June 2022)

- Source 2: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2021](#) (January 2017 to June 2017)
- Source 3: [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2020](#) (January 2010 to December 2016)

It is not possible to map offenders who have completed community sentences to local justice areas.

■ Courts

Steve Reed:

[128643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 119232 on Crown Court and Magistrates Courts: Repairs and Maintenance, what the average number of cases heard per day was in (a) magistrates and (b) crown courts in the latest period for which data is available.

Mike Freer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Courts: Standards

Steve Reed:

[126671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the median length of court waiting times in (a) Crown Courts and (b) Magistrate Courts since 2010.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice has published quarterly average hearing time data in England & Wales from Q1 2014 up to Q3 2022 in the 'Crown Court average waiting and hearing time tool', available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1129919/cc_waiting_hearing_tool.xlsx.

Steve Reed:

[126672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the median time taken between committing an offence and the completion of a case at (a) Crown and (b) magistrate courts in each year since 2010.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice has published quarterly data on median and mean time from offence to completion, available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2022>.

■ Criminal Proceedings

Steve Reed:

[126675]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many individuals have ceased pursuing a case prior to reaching trial for (a) rape, (b) domestic violence, (c) burglary cases and (d) drug-related cases since 2010.

Edward Argar:

Victims can withdraw from the criminal justice process at any stage and some of this information is published for adult rape and all offences as part of our Criminal Justice Delivery Data Dashboard and through trial effectiveness in the quarterly Criminal Court Statistics, available at the following links:

- <https://criminal-justice-delivery-data-dashboards.justice.gov.uk/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-court-statistics>

We are taking strong action to address victim attrition, including:

- In September, we fully rolled out pre-recorded cross examination (Section 28) for victims of sexual and modern slavery offences in all Crown Court locations across England and Wales. This special measure allows victims to pre-record evidence, spares them the glare of a live courtroom trial and allows them to give evidence in advance of the trial and then move on with their lives more quickly.
- We have more than quadrupled funding for victim support from £41m in 2009/10 to £192m by 2024/25, and are increasing the number of Independent Sexual and Domestic Abuse Advisors to over 1,000 by 2024/25.
- In December, we also launched a single source of 24/7 support for victims of rape and sexual abuse meaning every victim can now access free, confidential emotional support whenever and wherever they need it.

■ Energy: Meters

Dan Carden:

[126789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many court warrants to forcibly enter homes requested by energy suppliers' debt agents have been refused by magistrates since July 2021.

Mike Freer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Evictions

Matt Western:

[126763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people were evicted through (a) section 21 no-fault eviction notices and (b) in total in 2022.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice publishes possession statistics quarterly, the latest published data can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics>. This covers up to September 2022.

■ Offenders: Rehabilitation**Steve Reed:****[126666]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of rehabilitation activity requirements were not commenced within three months of sentence imposition in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Prison Accommodation: Costs**Ellie Reeves:****[129994]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost of expanding prison places in the (a) male and (b) female estates in (i) 2023, (ii) 2024 and (iii) 2025.

Damian Hinds:

The Ministry of Justice's Spending Review settlement at SR21 (for the 3 years ending FY2024/25) for expanding both male and female prison places was c£3.8bn. Planned annual spend and subsequent estimates will be agreed through the standard parliamentary process, i.e. Main and Supplementary Estimates. The estimate provided at SR21 did not provide a breakdown of costs between the male and female estate.

■ Prison Accommodation: Repairs and Maintenance**Steve Reed:****[126676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost of (a) facilities management and (b) other maintenance costs for unused prison spaces in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Steve Reed:**[126678]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison cells have been permanently closed due to maintenance for (a) 0- 11 months, (b) 12-23 months, (c) 24 - 35 months and (d) over 36 months.

Steve Reed:**[126679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of unplanned loss of prison places since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave on 4 November 2022 to Question [72998](#).

■ **Prison and Probation Service: Contracts****Steve Reed:**[\[126680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of terminated contracts within the HMP Prison and Probation Service in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Prisoners: Care Leavers****Matt Western:**[\[126761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of people in prison for (a) murder and (b) all crimes are care leavers.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Whilst we track prisoners who self identify as care experienced, we are aware that there is significant under reporting. We are unable to separately identify those who come under the statutory definition of a care leaver.

The legal definition of a care leaver is someone who has spent time in the care of the Local Authority for 13 weeks or more which includes their 16th birthday.

■ **Prisoners: Compensation****Steve Reed:**[\[126677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of compensation payments made to prisoners in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

The total cost of litigation damages paid to prisoners in England and Wales in each of the last three years is provided in the table below.

YEAR	LITIGATION DAMAGES PAID ON PRISONER CLAIMS
2019-20	£7,621,648
2020-21	£6,074,143
2021-22	£5,258,338

We successfully defend two-thirds of compensation cases brought by prisoners and always make sure debts to victims and the courts are paid before the offender sees a penny.

Regarding claims made under the Human Rights Act, which was introduced by the Labour Government in 1998, the Government's upcoming Bill of Rights will repeal the HRA and implement a permission stage to ensure trivial cases do not undermine public confidence in human rights (cl.15). The introduction of a permission stage will ensure that courts focus on serious human rights claims and places responsibility on the claimant to demonstrate that they have suffered a significant disadvantage before a human rights claim can be heard in court.

■ Prisons: Staff

Steve Reed:

[125380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison staff who left their job within (a) seven, (b) 28 and (c) 84 days of starting in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds:

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including leavers by length of service.

The latest set of HMPPS workforce statistics covering the period to 30 September 2022 is available in the public domain at: [HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2022).

Steve Reed:

[125381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison staff who left within 12 months of starting the role in each of the last three years.

Damian Hinds:

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including leavers by length of service.

The latest set of HMPPS workforce statistics covering the period to 30 September 2022 is available in the public domain at: [HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2022).

The next set of data for the period to 31 December 2022 is due to be published in the HMPPS Quarterly Workforce Statistics Bulletin on 16 February 2023.

Steve Reed:

[126662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of prison staff in operational support grades in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

The quarterly HMPPS workforce statistics publication covers staffing information, including the number of staff by grade.

The latest set of HMPPS workforce statistics covering the period to 30 September 2022 is available in the public domain at: [HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: September 2022 – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-september-2022).

■ Probation Service

Ellie Reeves: [130085]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much the Probation Service has spent on the (a) development and (b) use of (i) SARA, (ii) RISK Matrix 2000, (iii) ARMS and (iv) OASys.

Damian Hinds:

We do not hold centrally all the costs associated with using SARA (Spousal Assault Risk Assessment), Risk Matrix 2000, ARMS (Active Risk Management System) and OASys (Offender Assessment and Management System).

■ Probation Service: North East

Steve Reed: [126665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether suitable internet connections have been installed at (a) Redcar, Cleveland and Middlesbrough PDU and (b) other offices of the North East Probation Service.

Damian Hinds:

Ensuring that probation offices have Wi-Fi connectivity is a priority for the Ministry of Justice. We plan to ensure that all offices, including those in the North East region, are covered by the end of 2023-24.

All the probation offices have internet connectivity as a matter of course; however, this is in many cases cabled connection and it is the Wi-Fi activity we are now targeting as a priority.

Where wireless connectivity is required by probation staff or partners in sites without Wi-Fi, the current workaround, where 4g signal permits it, is for end users to the tether to the internet through MiFi or work mobile phone devices.

■ Probation Service: Staff

Ellie Reeves: [128694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the annual staffing budget was for the Probation Service in each of the last five years.

Ellie Reeves: [128695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much was spent on staffing in the Probation Service in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds:

The total amount budgeted and spent by Ministry of Justice on Probation Services in England and Wales for the years requested is set out in a summary table below.

FINANCIAL YEAR	BUDGET	EXPENDITURE
2021/22	782	787
2020/21	548	536
2019/20	470	479
2018/19	450	454
2017/18	437	414

Note:

- All figures in £m.
- Annual budgets are set taking into account vacancy levels and recruitment profiles.
- Data extracted from the MoJ accounting system, as per the year-end audited management accounts.
- Includes payroll costs and agency staff used to cover vacancies.
- Figures from July 2020 onwards includes costs that were transferred back to public ownership following the end of Community Rehabilitation Companies.
- In June 2021 over 7,000 staff were transferred from more than 50 legacy employers into the new unified Probation Service. This explains the payroll increase in spend and budget in 20/21 (part-year impact) and 21/22 (full year impact).
- All figures presented in nominal terms and have not been adjusted for inflationary factors.
- Data includes all Probation Services in England & Wales, Probation Reform Programme and those within Reducing Reoffending & Accommodation.

■ Remand in Custody

Steve Reed:

[\[126664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of individuals placed in remand for their own protection in each of the last three years.

Mike Freer:

This information could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

■ Sexual Offences: Trials

Steve Reed:

[\[126668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of rape and sexual offence trials listed as floating hearings in each year since 2010.

Edward Argar:

Decisions about the listing of cases, including decisions about whether any particular hearing should be fixed or floated, are entirely matters for the independent judiciary. Insofar as the Crown Court in England and Wales is concerned, the information requested can be found in the table(s) below:

FLOATED TRIALS

Year	No. of Rape & Sexual Offence	% of all offence types
2014	97	4%
2015	100	4%
2016	107	4%
2017	116	5%
2018	103	6%
2019	75	4%
2020	57	7%
2021	165	12%
Grand Total	820	5%

Information on trials broken down by offence are not available prior to 2014. Full year data is not yet available for 2022.

During the period 2014 to 2021, 58% of floated trials with rape and/or sexual assault offences were heard on the day and recorded as either effective or cracked trials.

The figures supplied have been extracted from live case management systems and whilst every effort is made to ensure that figures provided are accurate and complete, they have not been verified to the same standards as National Statistics and therefore inevitable limitations should be taken into account as there may be differing approaches as to how courts record their floaters in the daily list.

■ **Trials****Steve Reed:**[\[126669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of floating hearings that have not been heard in each year since 2010.

Mike Freer:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Steve Reed:

[\[126673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the median length of trial delays for (a) rape, (b) domestic violence, c) burglary and (d) drug-related offences in each of the last five years.

Mike Freer:

This information is not held centrally.

Steve Reed:

[\[126674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the median length of time taken from offence reported to trial completion for crimes related to (a) rape, (b) domestic violence, c) burglary and (d) drugs in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not available.

■ **Wandsworth Prison: Prison Officers**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[129849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison attended their shift on 12 January 2023.

Damian Hinds:

Figures for the number and proportion of prison officers at Wandsworth Prison who attended their shift on 12 January 2023 are provided in the table below.

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING	NIGHT
Attended shifts	167	156	54	12
Percentage of expected who attended including Payment Plus	72.6%	76.8%	114.9%	75%

- The data above is combined for Band's 3, 4 & 5 staff at HMP Wandsworth for the 12th January 2023.
- Expected shifts: these are the shifts which staff are scheduled to work from their shift patterns. (Data taken from the actual level of My-detail)
- Attended shifts: Is the staff attending for duty this includes staff on restricted duties who should be in the establishment, it also includes staff who have swapped shifts or staff who have volunteered to extend their shifts for TOIL. (Data taken from the Schedule level of My-Detail)
- Payment Plus: These are hours which staff have worked above their expected or attended shifts as overtime. (Data taken from the Time Recording level of My-detail)

■ Wandsworth Prison: Prisoners**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[129850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what is the average number of hours in a day that prisoners in Wandsworth Prison spend in their cells.

Damian Hinds:

This information is not currently recorded.

Prison governors are expected to deliver balanced regimes providing an appropriate amount of time out of cell for purposeful activity, such as education and employment. A new Purposeful Activity performance measure has been introduced for 2022-23. Additional measures are in place for attendance at work, education, interventions and services. These will, over time, give more detailed information.

■ Wandsworth Prison: Prisoners' Release**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[129851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been released from Wandsworth Prison without accommodation to return to in the past 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

Accommodation outcomes for 2022-23 will be included as part of the Prison Performance Ratings due to be published in July 2023.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE**■ Leader of the House of Commons: Trade Unions****Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[127804\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response from the Cabinet Office (127792).

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Affordable Housing and Social Rented Housing: Construction****Rachael Maskell:**[\[126725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help ensure that sufficient social housing and affordable housing is being developed in each area; and whether he has reviewed housing numbers and tenure since publication of the Census data.

Lucy Frazer:

Our Affordable Homes Programme is investing £11.5bn to deliver tens of thousands of homes across England - a significant proportion of which will be for Social and Affordable rent. It is the responsibility of local authorities to assess housing need in their area, and we will continue to work with them to ensure it is delivered.

Broadband: Infrastructure**Andrew Western:**[\[128740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of using permitted development powers for the installation of (a) fibre optic and (b) 5G (i) poles and (ii) other infrastructure in residential areas on those areas.

Lucy Frazer:

We have set a mission that, by 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population. All four mobile network operators launched their 5G networks in 2019, and 5G is now available from at least one mobile network operator outside 77% of premises across the UK. 73% of UK premises can now access gigabit-capable broadband - a significant leap forward from January 2019, when coverage was just 6%.

Changes to permitted development rights were made in Spring 2022 to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage and will further support progress towards digital connectivity in every part of the country. We are keeping use and impact of the planning changes under review.

Housing**Rachael Maskell:**[\[126724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many local authorities have requested a reduction in housing numbers since his announcement that housing numbers will be issued as guidance rather than obligatory.

Rachael Maskell:[\[126726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent steps he has taken to make progress on the City of York Local Plan; and when he plans that the inspectors will publish their findings.

Lucy Frazer:

The proposals outlined on 6 December 2022 in WMS [HCWS415](#) made by my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, are subject to ongoing consultation.

The emerging City of York local plan remains at examination with stage 4 hearings having been concluded in September 2022. The inspectors are independent of Government, but it is expected that, subject to approval by the Council's Executive, a consultation on the proposed Main Modifications to the draft plan will take place from February.

■ Housing Associations: Mould

Jim Shannon:

[\[126650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will meet housing associations to address the issue of damp and mould in housing association homes.

Dehenna Davison:

All social housing must be safe and decent, providing those living in homes with security and dignity. Following the Coroner's Report into the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, the Secretary of State took immediate action to address the risks of damp and mould in social housing. The Secretary of State has written to all [social housing providers](#) making it clear all homes must meet the Decent Home Standard (DHS), that, with regard to damp and mould, landlords should go further than the letter of the DHS, and that when tenants complain, landlords must take prompt action to remedy issues. The Regulator of Social Housing also [wrote](#) to landlords to seek information on their approach to damp and mould with returns due by 19 December.

The Secretary of State recently announced a review of damp and mould guidance and that new consolidated guidance for the housing sector will follow. More details of the review will follow.

■ Housing: Construction

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[126737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to extend the Help to Build: Equity Loan to up to 40% of estimated land and building costs to South East England.

Lucy Frazer:

The Help to Build scheme provides access to low deposit mortgages and improves affordability of home ownership for people who want to build their own homes.

Modelled, in part, on the original Help to Buy scheme, customers can borrow an equity loan of between 5% and 20% (up to 40% in London) of the estimated costs to buy the land (if needed) and build their home. Currently there are no plans to alter the percentage of equity loan available in the scheme.

Mike Amesbury:

[\[127895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many First Homes were completed in (a) total (b) the North West and (c) Weaver Vale constituency in the last 12 months.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of completions of First Homes in England is available in Live Table 1000. The breakdown by local authority and region can be found in the Affordable Housing supply open data. Both files can be found [here](#).

This data is not collected at constituency level.

■ Housing: Young People

Munira Wilson: [126827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of adults aged under 25 in England who spend more than one third of their net income on housing costs.

Munira Wilson: [126828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of adults aged under 25 in England who live in housing that is classified by his Department as a non-decent home.

Munira Wilson: [126829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of adults aged under 25 in England who live in housing that is overcrowded.

Lucy Frazer:

The English Housing Survey provides our best estimates of the conditions, circumstances, and energy efficiency of the English housing stock. The report is available online [here](#).

The department does not publish breakdowns of estimates of overcrowding by age of household reference person.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Charlotte Nichols: [127919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding from Levelling Up Fund Round 2 will be provided to each local authority.

Lisa Nandy: [129835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to paragraph 5.1 of his Department's guidance entitled Levelling Up Fund Round 2: explanatory note on the assessment and decision-making process published 19 January 2023, if he will place in the House of Commons Library the equalities analysis received by ministers which compared the list of places they had provisionally selected for funding with the list of places not selected for funding.

Lisa Nandy: [129836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether local authorities were informed in advance that any local authority that was successful in bidding for funding Levelling Up Fund Round 1 would automatically be barred from receiving funds in Levelling Up Fund Round 2.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [127879](#) on 24 January 2023. The published Levelling Up Fund Round 2 technical note set out the additional

considerations that could be taken into account when making funding decisions. This included *“taking into account other investment in a local area, including investment made from the first round of the Fund to encourage a spread of levelling up funds across places.”* The published explanatory note outlines the specifics of how decisions for the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 were made. Applicants to the Fund were informed of the outcome of decisions by letter sent on the 18 January.

■ Local Government: Buildings

Valerie Vaz: [\[129797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with local authorities on returning to (a) town halls and (b) other office facilities following the covid-19 pandemic.

Lee Rowley:

Local authorities are independent of central government. Now that all COVID-19 restrictions are no longer in force, it is for them to determine their own working arrangements, with a return to usual service being the norm.

■ Parks and Recreation Spaces

Seema Malhotra: [\[126655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to appoint a Minister for Parks and Green Spaces.

Seema Malhotra: [\[126656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the Government Response to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report: The Future of Public Parks, published in September 2017, CM 9503, how many meetings of (a) the cross-departmental group on public parks and (b) the sectoral group comprising of key partners across all levels of the park sector have been held since September 2017; and when those meetings took place.

Seema Malhotra: [\[126657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the challenges are facing the parks sector.

Kim Leadbeater: [\[126894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to protect the (a) future and (b) funding of parks and green spaces.

Dehenna Davison:

The Government recognises that parks and green spaces are vital to communities and the people they serve, which is why the £9 million [Levelling Up Parks Fund \(LUPF\)](#) announced in August 2021 as part of the Levelling Up agenda will help to increase accessibility to quality green space across the UK, and level up areas which

are most deprived of green space and provide communities with a place to come together.

The Park Action Group met on 2 January 2018, 23 May 2018, 5 February 2019 and 4 June 2019. The Park Action Group delivered a number of workstreams that remained active until the outbreak of COVID-19. The group's achievements includes an analysis of available funding for public parks. The experts who delivered it directly advised the Government on the design of the new Levelling Up Parks Fund. We have several forums which allow us to engage across departments on issues related to parks and green spaces and with stakeholders. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal meetings are not normally disclosed.

As with all departmental business, the Secretary of State maintains overall responsibility for the work of the department, and I support the Secretary of State on policy matters relating to parks and green spaces.

■ **Rented Housing: Reform**

Dan Carden:

[\[126785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reasons his Department will not introduce the Renters Reform Bill in this parliamentary session.

Felicity Buchan:

The government remains committed to introducing a Renters Reform Bill within this Parliament, and we will do so as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ **Vagrancy Act 1824**

Layla Moran:

[\[130114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his timeline is for publishing his Department's response to the consultation on the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [82438](#) on this important issue, on 14 November 2022.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Economic Growth: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[\[127925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating any remaining New Deal for Northern Ireland funding to organisations that currently rely on European Social Fund funding.

Mr Steve Baker:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), led by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), will invest £127m in Northern Ireland over the next two years.

DLUHC worked extensively with stakeholders in Northern Ireland to develop an investment plan that caters to the needs of Northern Ireland's society and economy. This plan was published on 14 December 2022 and can be accessed at:

[GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-northern-ireland-investment-plan/ukspf-investment-plan-northern-ireland](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-northern-ireland-investment-plan/ukspf-investment-plan-northern-ireland).

The UKSPF is not a like-for-like replacement for EU structural funding. It will allow us to invest in social programmes that target people and places most in need.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is considering options to ensure we maximise the benefit of the New Deal for Northern Ireland. Announcements on allocations for the remaining funding will be made in due course.

■ Public Expenditure: Northern Ireland**Stephen Farry:****[126873]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which stakeholders he or his Department have met with in the last six months to discuss the allocation of New Deal funding for Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

Northern Ireland Office officials have engaged with a range of stakeholders in both UK Government Departments and Northern Ireland Executive Departments, and externally, to discuss the allocation of New Deal for Northern Ireland funding.

Within the UK Government this has included His Majesty's Treasury; the Cabinet Office; the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Innovate UK; the Department for Transport and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Engagement with Northern Ireland Executive Departments or associated bodies has included the Department for the Economy; the Department for Communities; the Department of Education; Invest Northern Ireland; the Department for Infrastructure and Northern Ireland Water.

Engagement with external stakeholders has included universities; further education colleges; business representative organisations and third sector organisations and charities.

The Department will continue to work with partners in Northern Ireland Executive Departments and UK Government Departments to allocate funding to additional projects and ensure these are delivered as quickly and efficiently as possible, maximising both value for money and the contribution to the UK Government's objective of supporting prosperity in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make announcements in due course regarding the allocation of remaining New Deal for Northern Ireland funding.

■ **Terrorism: Northern Ireland**

Peter Kyle:

[\[127845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he plans to respond to the formal communication from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, reference OL GBR 10/2022, dated 12 July 2022, on the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

[Holding answer 24 January 2023]: A response was drafted by the Northern Ireland Office following receipt of the formal communication from the United Nations Special Rapporteurs in July 2022. Following a delay due to an administrative error, this will be issued shortly by the responsible department (the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office). We will be apologising for this administrative error and delay.

SCOTLAND

■ **Gender Recognition: Scotland**

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[130013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will publish the legal advice received by Government in advance of their Section 35 Order on the Gender Recognition Reform Bill (Scotland).

Mr Alister Jack:

Further to my answer of 24 January (UIN 125468), it is long-standing government practice, accepted by successive administrations, not to publish legal advice provided to the Government. The order, and a full Statement of Reasons published alongside it, set out in full the adverse effects the Government is concerned about in relation to the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill.

■ **Scotland Office: Minimum Wage**

Chris Stephens:

[\[129902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

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, who remain the employers.

However, all staff working in the Scotland Office are paid at a rate higher than the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

This Government is committed to paying people a decent living wage, which is being addressed through the statutory National Living Wage. In April 2022, the Government increased the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour. This will rise to £10.42 an hour from 1 April 2023, an increase of 9.7%.

By 2024, the Government has committed that the National Living Wage will reach 66% of median UK earnings.

The Government will always award contracts on the basis of the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Departments must ensure that they apply the legislative increase to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Fuels

Gareth Thomas: [\[126523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the potential impact on the reduction to CO2 emissions of the UK aviation sector switching to sustainable aviation fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas: [\[126524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects to allocate the £165 million in funding for Sustainable Aviation Fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) can achieve lifecycle emissions savings of over 70% compared with conventional jet fuel, when fully replacing fossil kerosene.

The Jet Zero Strategy, published in July 2022, estimates that if SAF accounts for 10% of UK jet fuel supply, it could deliver a reduction of 2.41 Mt CO2 per year.

On 22 December the Department announced the five projects which will receive a share of the £165m Advanced Fuels Fund. The funding is available across three financial years, ending in 2024/2025.

■ Bus Services: Disability

Rachael Maskell: [\[129845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require the use of audio-visual equipment on buses.

Mr Richard Holden:

We plan to require the provision of audible and visible information on local bus and coach services across Great Britain, and will introduce the Accessible Information Regulations shortly.

■ **Cycling and Walking: Infrastructure**

Gill Furniss:

[\[129918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many local authorities have developed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

Jesse Norman:

As of August last year, 78 upper tier local authorities reported that they had developed Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

■ **Department for Transport: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Jesse Norman:

The Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code by collecting and analysing a range of data on, for example, recruitment, career development, promotion, job allocation and resignations. This data is published in the Department's Equality Monitoring report. The Department also carries out pay modelling and analysis of performance pay. This includes analysis to monitor diversity impacts.

This information is both publicly available and can be shared with trade unions on request.

■ **Department for Transport: Minimum Wage**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[129894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Jesse Norman:

All employees within the Department for Transport are currently paid above the National Minimum Wage.

■ **Department for Transport: Public Expenditure**

Louise Haigh:

[\[129876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Written Answer of the 28 October 2022 to Question 67099 on Department of Health and Social Care: Public Expenditure, what the expected annual expenditure will be on the Major Projects Portfolio projects for the (a) Rapid Charging Fund, (b) Midlands Rail Hub, (c) East Coast Mainline Programme, (d) East Coast Digital Programme, (e) A417 Air Balloon, (f) Lower Thames Crossing, (g) HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg, (h) A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down, (i) Further Electrification of Midland Main Line, (j) East West Rail Configuration State 1, (k) A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet, (l) HS2 Phase 2a, (m) A12 Chelmsford to A120

Widening, (n) Transpennine Route Upgrade, (o) A66 Northern Trans-Pennine, (p) HS2 Phase 1, (q) Rail Passenger Services, (r) Crossrail Programme, (s) East West Rail Connection Stage 2 and 3, (t) Midland Main Line Programme, (u) 2nd Generation UK Search and Rescue Aviation and (v) Rail Transformation Programme; and if he will place that information in the House of Commons Library.

Huw Merriman:

The annual expenditures of these 22 major projects for 2021-22 were published on 20 July 2022 with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) Annual Report 2021-2022. This data can be found in the accompanying 'GMPP Government Major Projects Portfolio AR Data March 2022' document as 'Financial Year Forecast (£m) (including Non-Government Costs)'. As set out in PQ 68561 it is not currently possible to provide the expected annual expenditures for 2022-23 but these will be published at the appropriate time.

■ **Department for Transport: Trade Unions**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[127796](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

Jesse Norman:

There is a range of human resources information on the Department for Transport which is published on GOV.UK and is therefore publicly available. The Department also shares routine human resources information with its recognised trade unions as part of its regular engagement.

■ **Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**

Louise Haigh:

[[129877](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Rapid Charge Fund will begin to deliver funding.

Jesse Norman:

2023 will see a number of key milestones for the Rapid Charge Fund including a pilot for the fund and the launch of a public consultation in Spring.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**

Gill Furniss:

[[129948](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Zero Emission Vehicle mandate consultation.

Jesse Norman:

Responses to the technical consultation are being analysed and the Government will publish its response, and a full regulatory proposal and cost benefit analysis, in due course.

■ Rail Delivery Group: Legal Representation

Grahame Morris:

[\[129775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2023 to Question 125314 on Train Operating Companies: Industrial Relations, how much funding his Department has provided to the Rail Delivery Group for legal representation in relation to a complaint to the Central Arbitration Committee by the RMT union; and how much funding in total it anticipates providing Rail Delivery Group for this purpose.

Huw Merriman:

The Department has not provided any funding specifically for this purpose.

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment

Rachael Maskell:

[\[128677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of platforms do not have tactile paving to help blind and partially sighted passengers to know where the edge of the platform is; and what steps he is taking to reduce this number.

Huw Merriman:

Approximately 60 per cent of British mainline station platforms currently have tactile surfaces. We remain fully committed to fitting tactile paving at all remaining mainline stations and have funded Network Rail to install tactile paving at all GB stations by 2025.

■ Railways: Midlands and North of England

Louise Haigh:

[\[129878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17th January to Question 122182 on Railways: Midlands and North of England, for how many of the 217 track kilometres would a train reach 140mph.

Huw Merriman:

Within the 217km, trains would need to accelerate up to 140mph and decelerate back down to 125mph. The distance this would take depends upon the performance specification of the rolling stock.

Louise Haigh:

[\[129879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 17 January to Question 122183 on Railways: Midlands and North of England, how many stops would need to be reduced in order to achieve savings of (a) 25 minutes to Newcastle and Edinburgh, (b) 15 minutes to Darlington and (c) 20 minutes to Leeds.

Louise Haigh:

[\[129880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what change in numbers of (a) non-stop and (b) stopping trains per hour along the East Coast Mainline is needed to support journey time savings of 25 minutes to the North East.

Huw Merriman:

In line with normal project development, detailed timetabling work for the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) will be conducted later. Once developed, an updated East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable specification would be expected to be subject to public consultation.

As set out in the published Mott Macdonald report upon which the IRP ECML journey times are based, the fastest journey times between London and Leeds and London and Edinburgh assume two stops and one stop, respectively, whilst the fastest journey time from London to Newcastle assumes no intermediate stops. Not every train would adopt these patterns, with intermediate stations served by separate services.

■ West Coast Main Line**Damien Moore:**[\[130014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take additional steps to ensure the effective operation of the West Coast Main Line prior to the expiry of the short-term contract for the management of that line with Avanti West Coast.

Huw Merriman:

Effective operation of the West Coast Main Line requires Network Rail, as the infrastructure manager, and the train operating companies including West Midlands Trains, Avanti West Coast, and TransPennine Express to work collaboratively. Where train operating companies, including Avanti West Coast, perform poorly, the Department will continue to hold them to account for the things within their control using the mechanisms within the contract.

TREASURY**■ Actuaries: Regulation****Mr William Wragg:**[\[129847\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to (a) bring forward and (b) consult on legislative proposals on the oversight and regulation of the actuarial profession during this parliamentary session.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government's response to its White Paper consultation on its reform proposals was published on 31 May 2022. The Government has committed to legislating when Parliamentary time allows.

Prior to issuing its response to the White Paper consultation, the Government consulted extensively on its proposals to reform the oversight and regulation of the actuarial profession, including holding discussions with a range of actuarial stakeholders. The Government will continue to engage with actuarial stakeholders.

■ Banks: Complaints

Andrew Lewer:

[130050]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with banks on ensuring that there is provision to address unresolved banking complaints following the planned closure of the Business Banking Resolution Service in December 2023.

Andrew Griffith:

The Business Banking Resolution Service (BBRS) is an independent non-governmental body that does not receive any public funding.

The Government has always been clear that the independence of the BBRS is vital, and as such it is not appropriate for the Government to comment on its future.

According to the timelines agreed by the BBRS when it was set up, the scheme for historical complaints will close on 14 February 2023, while the contemporary scheme for cases from large SMEs is due to close at the end of 2023 unless an extension is granted by participating banks.

■ Brexit: Economic Situation

Marsha De Cordova:

[130038]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of Brexit on the UK economy.

Andrew Griffith:

It is for the Office for Budget Responsibility to provide economic and fiscal forecasts. Global external factors, including Covid and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, continue to put pressures on the UK economy. It is not possible to definitively disentangle the effect of these global factors from the longer-term impacts of EU exit on the UK economy and households.

■ Iron and Steel: Exports

Bill Esterson:

[129750]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much steel produced in the UK was exported to other countries in (a) 1997, (b) 2010 and (c) 2022.

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, 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>.

Data relating to 1997 is no longer available.

■ Royal Mint: Non-fungible Tokens

Tulip Siddiq: [\[127858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 January 2023 to Question 121058 on Royal Mint: Non-fungible Tokens, when he plans to provide an update on the creation of a Royal Mint non-fungible token.

Andrew Griffith:
In due course.

■ Taxation: Fines

Angela Rayner: [\[128645\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the average tax penalty paid to HMRC for (a) late and (b) underpaid taxation was in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

Below is a table providing the average penalty value (rounded to the nearest £ hundred) between 2019-20 to 2021-22.

TAX YEARS	AVERAGE PENALTY VALUE
2019/20	£4,300
2020/21	£3,700
2021/22	£3,500

■ Wealth

Dan Carden: [\[127890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to Oxfam's report entitled Survival of the Richest, published on 16 January 2023, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the finding that over the last two years the richest 1 per cent of individuals obtained nearly twice as much wealth as the rest of the world put together.

Dan Carden: [\[131292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Oxfam report entitled Survival of the Richest, published on 16 January 2023.

Andrew Griffith:

This Government is committed to creating an environment in which high economic growth benefits all.

The UK system is designed to ensure, among other things, that the richest in our society pay their fair share on their wealth and assets.

Distributional analysis to accompany Autumn Statement 2022 can be found on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk).

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Females: Science

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[903315\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support women in STEM roles.

Maria Caulfield:

We've made great progress in increasing the number of girls studying STEM subjects but we need to do more to get women into STEM roles to meet the demands of today's workforce.

To support that we are launching a new STEM returners pilot that will encourage those who have taken a break to care for others back into work – giving them the opportunity to refresh and grow their skills in sectors where their talents are most needed.

By supporting STEM returners, there is significant opportunity to address skills shortages and boost our economy.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Kate Hollern:

[\[903312\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the Government plans to bring forward a health disparities white paper in 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

The Major Conditions White Paper, that we announced on Tuesday, will apply a geographical lens to address disparities in outcomes. This will support the levelling up mission to extend healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035 and narrow the gap between areas by 2030.

As the Major Conditions White Paper will therefore cover many of the same areas as a document focused on health disparities, we will no longer be publishing a separate White Paper.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme: Warwick and Leamington****Matt Western:**[\[129996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Warwick and Leamington are entitled to Access to Work funding; and what is the average waiting time for receipt of that funding.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work is a demand led programme which provides help to disabled people to start or stay in work. The programme provides support to individuals that goes beyond reasonable adjustments; as such, any disabled person in or about to start work, who needs support beyond reasonable adjustments, is eligible to apply for Access to Work. We do not hold information on if a population is entitled to Access to Work, we only have data on who has applied.

We do not hold information on waiting times for receipt of funding by geographical area.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Domestic Abuse**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[129830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Independent review of the Child Maintenance Service response to domestic abuse, published on 17 January 2023, whether he plans to introduce legislative proposals on tackling domestic abuse in response to that review.

Mims Davies:

The Government has accepted 8 out of the 10 recommendations and is committed to taking these forward.

The Government is already committed to amending primary legislation in supporting a Private Members Bill being taken forward by the Honourable Member for Hastings and Rye. The bill will allow victims of domestic abuse to request collect and pay on the grounds of domestic abuse and where evidence can be provided. Further legislation will be required and will be brought forward once the measures have been consulted on where necessary, fully developed, and parliamentary time allows.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[129831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason he rejected recommendation 10 of the Independent Review of the Child Maintenance Service response to domestic abuse published on 17 January 2023.

Mims Davies:

The Government recognises the importance of developing clear plans for implementation of the independent review recommendations and believes the best way to monitor progress and ensure effective delivery is through the Department's existing robust delivery mechanisms.

The Government has accepted 8 out of the 10 recommendations and is committed to taking these forward.

■ **Child Maintenance Service: Reviews**

Caroline Lucas:

[127733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government response to the Independent Review of the Child Maintenance Service Response to Domestic Abuse, published 17 January 2023, what assessment she had made of the potential effect of not adopting recommendation 10 on the implementation of the remaining recommendations.

Mims Davies:

The Government recognises the importance of developing clear plans for implementation of the independent review recommendations and believes the best way to monitor progress and ensure effective delivery is through the Department's existing robust delivery mechanisms.

The Government has accepted 8 out of the 10 recommendations and is committed to taking these forward. It will also take what other practical steps it can to ensure parents who have experienced abuse can set up and maintain child maintenance arrangements safely.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Minimum Wage**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [129895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Mims Davies:

This Government is committed to paying people a decent living wage, which is being addressed through the statutory National Living Wage. Departments must ensure that they apply the legislative increase to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage.

The National Living Wage (NLW) is the statutory minimum wage for workers aged 23 and over. Different minimum wage rates apply to 21-22 year olds, 18-20 year olds, 16-17 year olds and apprentices aged under 19 or in the first year of an apprenticeship.

In April 2022, the Government increased the National Living Wage to £9.50 per hour. This will rise to £10.42 an hour from 1 April 2023, an increase of 9.7%. By 2024, the Government has committed that the National Living Wage will reach 66% of median UK earnings.

As of 24 January 2023, the total number of civil servants in DWP paid at the National Minimum Wage rate per hour was 0 (0% of all staff) and the National Living Wage rate per hour was 65. Everyone in DWP is paid at least the national living wage, with the vast majority above it.

■ Department of Work and Pensions: South Tyneside**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[129967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much money South Tyneside Council has returned to his Department from grants allocated over the last two years as of 23 January 2023.

Mims Davies:

Having looked at various systems we have determined that this information is not centrally held and so locating, analysing and retrieving the data would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Employment and Support Allowance**Jonathan Ashworth:** [\[129826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people stopped receiving Employment and Support Allowance as a result of gaining employment in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on ESA exit reasons is not readily available for analytical use. Therefore, providing such information would require the matching of several databases, and would take a disproportionate amount of time to locate and produce.

■ Pensioners: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[129944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of inflation on pensioners in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Laura Trott:

The Secretary of State announced on 17 November that State Pensions and benefits will be up-rated from April 2023 by 10.1%, in line with the increase in the Consumer Prices Index in the year to September 2022, subject to parliamentary approval.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, which is why, in addition to the £37 billion of support we have provided for cost of living pressures in 2022/23, we are acting now to ensure support continues throughout 2023/24.

Over 8 million UK households on eligible means tested benefits, including those on Pension Credit, will receive additional Cost of Living Payments totalling up to £900 in the 2023/24 financial year.

In addition, eight million pensioner households will receive a £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment as a top-up to their winter fuel payment, and pensioners in receipt of an eligible disability benefit will receive the £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment.

Specific statistics relating to cost-of-living payments are not available. However, the latest published Pension Credit figures (May 2022) show there were 2,883 claimants in Coventry North East and 7,152 claimants in Coventry. The latest available winter fuel payment statistics (2021/22) show 14,352 customers in Coventry North East and 46,614 customers in Coventry received a winter fuel payment.

■ **Personal Independence Payment**

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[129779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an online portal for Personal Independence Payment claims to help improve communication between his Department and claimants.

Tom Pursglove:

The Health Transformation Programme is modernising health and disability benefit services. It will create a more efficient service and a vastly improved claimant experience, reducing journey times and improving communications with claimants to increase transparency and build trust in our services and decisions.

The programme is transforming the entire PIP service, including introducing a digital PIP service with the option to apply online. We are currently operating a small-scale test of this new apply service, taking a small number of claims to begin with, before we gradually and carefully increase the number of people who can use it.

We have already introduced a digital version of the PIP2 health questionnaire, which is now offered to the majority of those making a claim. The full online apply service will offer claimants the option to claim PIP online, including the ability to save and resume and to upload medical evidence.

The programme will be developing the new PIP service carefully and incrementally, designing it around the needs of claimants, making it quicker, simpler and more transparent.

■ **Social Security Benefits**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[129794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the accessibility of information on benefits available to those without internet access.

Guy Opperman:

DWP seeks to identify individuals who have complex user needs and/or require additional support to enable them to access our benefits and services; this includes those who are claiming (or need to claim) Universal Credit, who do not have internet access.

We are continuously reviewing and improving the service for people who claim UC to ensure that it is accessible and responsive to their needs. Currently, 98% of claimants manage their UC account online.

Jobcentres remain open to provide access to services for claimants who need face-to-face support. There is also a telephone number displayed outside each Jobcentre with details of how to contact DWP. Jobcentre colleagues remain available to those claimants who need us most.

Help to Claim support is being delivered independently by Citizens Advice, in partnership with Citizens Advice Scotland, with support provided through telephony and digital channels. Those individuals who are unable to access support via these channels can go to their local jobcentre, local libraries and local advice centres where they can use computers with internet access free of charge.

It should be noted that The Office for National Statistics statistical bulletin 'Internet access – households and individuals, Great Britain: 2020' reported that in January to February 2020, 96% of households in Great Britain had internet access. This can be accessed at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020>

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Whipps Cross Hospital: Repairs and Maintenance

Stella Creasy:

[121043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons his Department has not made a decision on the scheme-specific business case for the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Will Quince:

Whipps Cross Hospital is one of the Pathfinder schemes within the New Hospital Programme, these will be the first of the larger and more complex schemes to be taken forward. Decisions on specific business cases for schemes which are expected to **be funded** commence after 2025 are dependent on the approval of the programme wide business case.

The New Hospital Programme continues to work closely with Barts Health NHS Trust to develop their new hospital scheme at Whipps Cross Hospital in line with the national programme approach to standardisation which will reduce end to end delivery timescales for individual schemes. The national approach will ensure efficient delivery of the new hospitals and provide value for money so that patients and staff have access to world class facilities.

HOME OFFICE

■ Members: Correspondence

David Linden:

[114859]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will respond to the correspondence sent by email on 26 October 2022 and again on 28 November and 12 December 2022 from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11726.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 10 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Robert Jenrick:

DL13230 – the Home Office replied on 6 January 2023.

DL11726 - The Home Office **replied on 25 January 2023.** ~~has no record of receiving this correspondence.~~

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Universal Credit: Cold Weather Payments****Afzal Khan:****[\[125487\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing people in receipt of Universal Credit who work but have limited capacity to work to be eligible for the Cold Weather Payment.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Laura Trott:

Cold Weather Payments make an important contribution towards the additional heating costs incurred during periods of exceptionally cold weather, between 1st of November and the 31st of March each year. **There are no plans to change eligibility.**

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Allocations 2022/23

Minister for the Cabinet Office and HM Paymaster General (Jeremy Quin):

[[HCWS525](#)]

I wish to update the House on the publication of the Annual Report of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) for Financial Year 2021/22, as well as to announce the initial regional and thematic allocations for this Financial Year (2022/23).

The CSSF is a cross-government fund which uses Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding to enable the integrated delivery of National Security Council priorities. In 2021/22, the CSSF spent £858.7 million against a final cross-government allocation of £864.2 million, representing 99.4% spend. A further breakdown of spend against regional and thematic allocation, by department and by discretionary and non-discretionary spend is included in the FY21/22 Annual Report.

The report outlines how the Fund evolved to deliver against the priorities set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, including through the introduction of two new portfolios: International State Threats which aims to improve the UK's ability to detect and deter hostile state activity; and the Gender Peace and Security Portfolio, which seeks to use innovative approaches to addressing gender in post-conflict reconstruction work.

The Report further demonstrates how CSSF programmes have delivered against the Fund's core principles, including through further improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of results to ensure value for money and effective delivery.

During this reporting period, the Fund continued to adapt to address the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and played an important role in the UK's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A copy of this document will be deposited in the libraries of both Houses in Parliament and published on GOV.UK.

The CSSF has allocated £889 million to portfolios for financial year 2022/23. This includes some over-allocation, following best practice, to ensure full spend by the end of the financial year.

FY 2022/23 ALLOCATIONS (MILLIONS)

Allocation	Non-ODA	ODA	Total
Middle East North Africa	33.327	56.894	90.221
Eastern Europe,	43.765	45.100	88.865

FY 2022/23 ALLOCATIONS (MILLIONS)

Central Asia

Africa (sub-Saharan)	34.759	37.000	71.759
Western Balkans	11.097	29.400	40.497
Overseas Territories	21.289	4.869	26.158
South Asia	10.172	30.145	40.317
Asia Pacific	3.526	11.200	14.726
Americas	0.000	8.000	8.000
REGIONAL TOTAL	157.936	222.608	380.544
Counter Extremism	14.674	20.526	35.200
Serious and Organised Crime	8.531	12.620	21.151
Cyber	14.531	11.550	26.081
Multilateral Strategy	3.581	4.387	7.968
Gender, Peace and Security	0.578	5.000	5.578
Migration	1.156	5.000	6.156
International State Threats	11.560	2.000	13.560
National Security Communications Team	3.581	0.000	3.581
THEMATIC TOTAL	58.192	61.083	119.275
Peacekeeping	234.159	76.466	310.625
AMISOM	30.000	0.000	30.000
MOD UN Ops Africa	28.617	0.000	28.617
MOD UNFICYP	6.263	0.000	6.263
Non-Discretionary TOTAL	299.039	76.466	375.505
Corporate Delivery Support & Other (this	6.936	6.934	13.870

FY 2022/23 ALLOCATIONS (MILLIONS)

includes Joint Funds

Unit and pilot activities)

TOTAL CSSF	522.103	367.091	889.194
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ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Update to the agricultural transition plan

Minister of State (Mark Spencer):

[\[HCWS527\]](#)

We are undertaking the most significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England in decades as we take England out of the EU's bureaucratic and damaging Common Agricultural Policy. Today I am setting out detailed plans for the nation's farming sector, supporting farmers to be profitable and resilient as they produce food sustainably while protecting nature and enhancing the environment.

These plans build on the announcements made at the Oxford Farming Conference earlier this month. They provide clarity and certainty to farmers, allowing them to make business decisions and cover costs as direct payments are phased out whilst getting involved in Environmental Land Management schemes.

The roll out of the Sustainable Farming Incentive will be accelerated, with six additional standards added this year, meaning farmers can receive payment for actions on hedgerows, grassland, arable and horticultural land, integrated pest management and nutrient management. They build on the three existing standards to improve soil health and moorlands introduced in 2022 – which nearly 1,900 farmers already have in agreements.

Farmers will also be paid to deliver more through an enhanced version of the Countryside Stewardship scheme, which will see around 30 additional actions available to farmers by the end of 2024. The expansion builds on the more than 250 actions farmers can take at present. The scheme has seen a 94% increase in uptake since 2020 and is now part of thousands of farm businesses. The next round of Countryside Stewardship Higher-Tier will open in February, with Mid-Tier following in March.

Countryside Stewardship Plus will reward farmers for taking coordinated action, working with neighbouring farms and landowners to support climate and nature aims. The Countryside Stewardship scheme will also be improved so farmers benefit from greater flexibility over when they can apply and how they manage their agreements, with improved access for tenant farmers and increased access to Higher Tier options and agreements.

Applications for the second round of the Landscape Recovery scheme will open in the spring to support ambitious large-scale nature recovery projects, focusing on net zero, protected sites and habitat creation. We will take on up to 25 projects which could include

projects creating and enhancing woodlands, peatland, nature reserves and protected sites such as ancient woodlands, wetlands and salt marshes.

Taken together, the Environmental Land Management schemes will offer something for every type of farmer. This includes tenant farmers, with a range of actions relevant to their holding, especially through the Sustainable Farming Incentive which has been designed with them in mind. The schemes will make food production more resilient and efficient over the longer term whilst contributing towards the UK's environmental goals on climate adaptation, biodiversity, water quality and net zero. Together this will safeguard the long-term prosperity of the farming industry and protect the environment for future generations.

HOME OFFICE

■ Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Appointed Person Report 2021-2022

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):

[\[HCWS524\]](#)

I am today laying before Parliament the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) Appointed Person report covering England and Wales for the period 2021-22. The Appointed Person is independent of Government and scrutinises the circumstances and manner in which search and seizure powers conferred by the Act are exercised under particular circumstances.

I am pleased that we are now able to publish the Appointed Person's latest report. Having considered the circumstances in which the relevant powers were used, the Appointed Person is satisfied that the criteria required for justifying the searches without prior judicial approval were met and that the powers of search were exercised appropriately.

In 2021-22, there has been a decrease in the number of cases where search and seizure powers are used without prior approval, although we are seeing a number of new agencies report across the country who have not submitted reports previously. Notably, three separate cases related to the seizure of cryptoassets. Seizing cryptoassets without judicial approval is largely due to agencies having to move quickly before the assets are accessed from another device and moved elsewhere. Proposed reforms in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill are designed to enable the seizure of cryptoassets in more circumstances than at present.

The Appointed person has also recognised our progress against previous recommendations and has made no new recommendations for the period. This suggests that the powers are being used in accordance with the Act. These powers are important for agencies to act quickly in live operation to search and seize potential criminal assets, so we are pleased to see that they are being used appropriately. We will continue to monitor the way that the powers have been used closely.

Copies of the report will be available in the Vote Office.

■ Update on the Windrush Lessons Learned Review Recommendations

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):

[\[HCWS523\]](#)

Today I am updating Parliament on Home Office delivery of the recommendations set out in the Windrush Lessons Learned Review (WLLR), published in March 2020.

Since my appointment as Home Secretary, I have made a commitment to resolve the outstanding issues related to Windrush and have met with members of the Windrush Working Group both to hear their feedback and more formally at the most recent Cross Government Windrush Working Group where I was honoured to co-chair with Bishop Derek Webley.

Since the injustices of Windrush came to light, there has been a concerted effort across the Home Office to right the wrongs suffered by those affected. This work continues and we are making sustained progress delivering on the recommendations and the commitments made in our Comprehensive Improvement Plan.

In her report last year, Wendy Williams concluded that 21 out of 30 of her recommendations have been met or partially met. She acknowledged that the scale of the challenge she set the department was significant and that change on this scale takes time.

Since then, we have made further progress in delivering against Wendy Williams' recommendations.

For example, in June 2022, the 'Serving Diverse Communities – Acting on Our Values' learning package was launched across the Home Office, starting with Recommendations 24 (learning for Senior Civil Servants) and 29 (diversity and inclusion). The learning package for Recommendation 6 – The History of the UK and its Relationship with the Rest of the World, will be launched in the coming weeks.

The department continues to make progress on compensating those unfairly impacted. As of December 2022, the Windrush Compensation scheme paid out or offered £64.08m in compensation to Windrush victims across 1,417 claims. £53.98m of this has been paid and over 59% of claims (3,025) have received a final decision.

The Home Office regularly reviews the best way to deliver against the intent of Wendy Williams' Windrush Lessons Learned review. As such, after considering officials advice, I have decided not to proceed with Recommendations 3 (Run Reconciliation Events), 9 (Introduce Migrants' Commissioner) and 10 (Review the remit and role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI)) in their original format.

Extensive consideration has been given to how to deliver these recommendations in appropriate and meaningful ways: ensuring that individuals have opportunities to tell their stories; amplifying the voices of individuals engaging with the immigration system; and driving scrutiny of the department.

On reconciliation events specifically, on the balance of expert advice received on how to approach this incredibly sensitive subject, I am persuaded that there are more effective ways of engaging with those impacted.

The department has undertaken a significant programme of face-to-face engagement with the communities impacted by the Windrush scandal since 2018. Surgeries were held in community halls and places such as churches, mosques and care homes, as and where the need was identified. The engagement events were held in most major cities across the UK and including regions such as the West Midlands, London and South West. The events were hosted by senior members of the Windrush Programme and provided individuals with the opportunity to speak to them about the impact the scandal had had on their and their family's lives. Over 3,000 people were reached through these events. This engagement with communities is further supported by the £500,000 Windrush Community Fund which was launched in 2020 and provided funding to grassroots organisations and charities with grants of up to £25,000 each to promote the Windrush Schemes in innovative ways. Regular dialogue hosted by senior officials are held in forums with external stakeholders from Windrush communities who provide feedback and scrutiny of our engagement and communication efforts.

This type of engagement will remain an important part of our work. Further, I look forward to celebrating the contribution that the Windrush community has made to our country in the upcoming 75th anniversary celebrations.

Recommendations 9 and 10 relate to the establishment of a Migrants Commissioner and a review of the role of the ICIBI. As Home Secretary, I remain committed to the importance of scrutiny, both internal and external. There are a number of ways in which we are inviting this challenge and scrutiny in a more efficient way. In October 2022, the department established the Independent Examiner for Complaints (IEC). This office will ensure that customers who are not satisfied with the final response to their complaints have an opportunity to have their case reviewed independently by the IEC, helping the Home Office to identify learning and wider lessons from complaints to improve its service.

The IEC provides scrutiny of the department's complaints procedure. Beyond this, I remain committed to the importance of scrutiny. I welcome the insight and challenge that I and the wider department have received from our colleagues in the Windrush Working Group. Professor Martin Levermore, in his role as Independent Advisor, has been constructively challenging and very supportive in the development of the Windrush Compensation Scheme. This has included proactively providing suggestions on improvements to the Scheme, such as enhancing linkages between the Compensation Scheme and the Windrush Status Scheme, which the department is now actively working on delivering.

External bodies are not the only source of scrutiny. As Wendy Williams identified, the very culture of the department needed a fundamental shift, bringing policy development and service delivery into contact with those who are impacted by it, including those who might not agree with it. This is how we shift culture and subject ourselves to scrutiny and this is how we are changing.

I am proud of the efforts made by teams across the Home Office, but we know there is more to do. Many people suffered terrible injustices and the department will continue working hard to deliver a Home Office worthy of every community served. Wendy Williams acknowledged that our ambition to achieve genuine cultural change requires ongoing reflection and a commitment to constant improvement. She acknowledged that the scale of the challenge she set the department was significant and that change on this scale takes time. The Home Office keeps the Home Affairs Select Committee updated on progress against the recommendations and will continue to do so.

An update on each of the recommendations is provided in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Table [Windrush Recommendation Update.pdf]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Food and Drink Export Council Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Exports) (Andrew Bowie):
[\[HCWS521\]](#)

Today I am providing an update on the establishment of the Food and Drink Export Council (FDEC).

I am pleased to announce that the inaugural meeting of the FDEC took place on Wednesday 25 January 2023.

The UK Government previously announced its intention to establish the new FDEC in response to recommendation 13 of the Trade and Agriculture Commission. The Department for International Trade (DIT) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have worked in partnership with the devolved administrations and industry to develop the remit and membership of the FDEC.

The FDEC is a collaborative expert committee which I co-chair alongside Ian Wright CBE, a leading figure in the industry.

British food and drink are among the best in the world and renowned for their quality and provenance. Exporting supports higher pay and more productive jobs. We are helping our farmers and food producers to seize the opportunity of the enormous global demand for British food and drink. The Council has an 18-month term with a focus on harnessing the expertise and resource from government and industry across the UK in a collective endeavour to increase agriculture, food, and drink exports. It brings together dynamic agriculture, food, and drink sector experts from across the UK with an onus on sharing knowledge, raising ambition, building capability, and effective collaboration. The full membership is listed below:

1. Ian Wright CBE (Co-chair)
2. Andy Richardson, Volac
3. Anthony Mulley, Quorn

4. Dominic Goudie, Food and Drink Federation
5. Donna Fordyce, Seafood Scotland
6. Ewen Cameron, Scottish Development International
7. Grainne Moody, Invest NI
8. Helen Dallimore, Coombe Castle
9. Iain Baxter, Scotland Food and Drink
10. Keith Smyton, Welsh Government
11. Lee Hemmings, Belvoir Farm
12. Margaret Boanas, International Meat Trade Association
13. Michael Bell OBE, Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association
14. Nick von Westenholz, National Farmers Union
15. Patricia Dillon, Speyside Distillers
16. Phil Hadley, Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board
17. Rachel Gwyon, DIT
18. Sandra Sullivan MBE, Food and Drink Exporters Association
19. Tee Sandhu, SamosaCo
20. Tim Brooks, DEFRA

The launch of the FDEC reflects the UK Government's strategy to promote exports from all parts of the UK and level up the country. It is a genuine partnership which recognises and respects the unique and different approaches to supporting exports that have evolved across the whole of the UK. The FDEC has no remit to discuss strategic trade policy, negotiations of free trade agreements, or areas of devolved or reserved competence.

You can find out more about the FDEC here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/food-and-drink-export-council>

PRIME MINISTER

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[HCWS522]

It was announced on 11 October 2022 that responsibility for Union and Devolution policy would move from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the Cabinet Office under the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

On 25 October, I appointed the Secretary of State for Levelling Up as Minister for Intergovernmental Relations. This means that day to day responsibility for the Union and Devolution Policy will remain in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities. The Union and Constitution Group will also have a presence in the Cabinet Office to support me in my role as Minister for the Union.

Strengthening the Union and delivering for all people and communities across the UK is a priority for all of UK Government. This change will allow the Levelling Up Secretary to lead the Government's day to day engagement with the Devolved Administrations and drive forward cross-Government efforts towards delivering tangible improvements for people across the UK, including through levelling up.

TREASURY

■ Charter for Budget Responsibility autumn 2022 update

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Jeremy Hunt):

[\[HCWS526\]](#)

Today I have laid before Parliament the Charter for Budget Responsibility. The Charter sets out the new fiscal framework announced at Autumn Statement 2022 and codifies the government's commitment to responsible management of the public finances. The fiscal rules ensure that policy keeps the public finances on a sustainable path, requiring that debt falls as a share of the economy over the forecast.

The Charter was first published in draft on 17 November 2022. No further changes have been made to the Charter since it was published in draft.

A debate and vote in the House of Commons on the updated Charter will be scheduled in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Automatic Enrolment Earnings Trigger and Qualifying Earnings Band Review 2023/24

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions (Laura Trott):

[\[HCWS520\]](#)

Automatic enrolment into workplace pensions (AE) has been a great success to date, with over 10.8 million people having been automatically enrolled and more than 2.1 million employers meeting their duties. Since the introduction of AE in 2012, total annual pension saving by eligible employees has increased by £33 billion in real terms. The Government remains committed to building on this achievement and to transforming the retirement prospects for millions of workers.

The main focus of this year's annual review of the AE earnings trigger and lower and upper earnings limits of the qualifying earnings band (the AE thresholds) has been to ensure the continued stability of the policy in light of the impact of Covid-19 and prevailing economic factors. We want to ensure that our approach continues to enable individuals, for whom it makes economic sense, to save towards their pensions whilst also ensuring affordability for employers and taxpayers. The review has concluded that all AE thresholds for 2023-24 will be maintained at their 2022-23 levels. This is consistent with our ambitions to build a stronger, more inclusive savings culture. The Government are

considering what more can be done to enable people to have greater financial security in retirement.

The 2023-24 Annual Thresholds

The automatic enrolment earnings trigger will remain at £10,000.

The lower earnings limit of the qualifying earnings band will remain at £6,240.

The upper earnings limit of the qualifying earnings band will remain at £50,270.

The analysis supporting the review will be published and a copy placed in the Library of the House. It will be available on the www.gov.uk website, following publication.