



Daily Report

Monday, 30 January 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 30 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:55 P.M., 30 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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Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Business: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[131266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with businesses in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry on the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on those businesses.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses, including those in Coventry North East and Coventry constituency, and is engaging with businesses across the UK to understand these challenges and explore ways to mitigate them.

The Government has reversed the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, implemented the cut to fuel duty for 12 months and raised the Employment Allowance to £5,000. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter.

In addition, at the Autumn Statement, my Rt Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

■ **Charities: Energy**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[132449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons he has not launched a consultation on introducing a social energy tariff.

Graham Stuart:

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with stakeholders to consider the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024, including options such as social tariffs.

Officials are assessing the options and discussing these with stakeholders. The Government will set out its position when this assessment is complete, in time to deliver a new approach from April 2024 when the Energy Price Guarantee comes to an end.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 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.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy routinely collects a wide variety of data relating to its employees; much of this is published and is publicly available on GOV.UK. Human Resource teams use this data to review the impact of our policies and procedures in line with the Civil Service Code, and other our statutory obligations, and make recommendations for improvements, as necessary.

■ **Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016**

Stella Creasy:

[\[131181\]](#)

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 Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016 set out the requirements that must be met to ensure safe electrical equipment products are placed on the market. The regulations require manufacturers to show how their products meet the principal elements of the safety objectives.

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.

We will continue to ensure that only safe electrical equipment products are placed on the market in the United Kingdom and that market surveillance authorities have the necessary enforcement powers.

■ **Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Coventry**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[132444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry receive the correct level of support from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme is set out clearly in legislation so will be applied in a uniform way by all licensed suppliers. The regulations include a robust compliance and enforcement regime to ensure requirements are being met. Suppliers are also required to inform customers about the details of support, including the amount of the discount and discounted supply price in a timely and reasonable manner.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Leisure and Swimming Pools**Gerald Jones:**[\[131270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of not including (a) swimming pools and (b) other leisure services in the list of sectors eligible for the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme on their financial viability.

Graham Stuart:

During the review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, a large number of 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 identifying the most energy and trade intensive sectors. All sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity will be 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.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Telephone Services**Daisy Cooper:**[\[132590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department (a) has or (b) has requested access to the Electricity Central Online Enquiry Service for the purpose of administering the Energy Bill Support Scheme (Alternative Funding).

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) will not be administered via the Energy Central Online Enquiry Service as energy suppliers do not have details of the households sub-metered to their customers, making it impossible for them to identify eligible households and provide support. The Local Authorities across England, Scotland and Wales will deliver the EBSS AF this winter.

■ Energy: Meters**Dan Carden:**[\[131314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2023 to Question 127884 on Energy: Meters, for what reason his Department does not plan to obligate suppliers to stop forced prepayment meter switching; and if his Department will review whether a voluntary approach is an effective way to stop that practice.

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, court action and physical disconnection. Obligating suppliers to stop PPM switching even as a last resort could lead to an increase in bailiff action.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also asked energy suppliers voluntarily to commit to stopping this practice. Ofgem has stringent rules on the force-fitting of PPMs. The Secretary of State has written to Ofgem asking it to conduct a review to make sure suppliers are complying with those rules and I met with suppliers on Wednesday 25th January.

Chi Onwurah:

[132391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has had with Ofgem regarding energy suppliers' compliance with existing rules on prepayment meters and vulnerable energy customers.

Graham Stuart:

I met with Ofgem and energy suppliers on 25th January to discuss matters related to energy customers on prepayment meters.

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.

Rachael Maskell:

[132446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requesting that energy companies (a) hand deliver or (b) post energy support prepayment meter cards to customers to help increase their usage.

Graham Stuart:

The Government continues to work with suppliers to communicate the Energy Bills Support Scheme and the importance of customers checking post, emails and text for prepayment meter vouchers and taking action to redeem them.

Suppliers have an obligation to make a minimum of three attempts by at least two different methods (post, email, text, special action message) to contact customers who have not redeemed their voucher. Some suppliers are visiting relevant customers' homes. Vouchers are valid for 90 days. Replacement vouchers can be issued but all vouchers must be redeemed by 30 June 2023.

Rachael Maskell:

[132448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is taking to help energy companies share data about which customers are on pre-payment schemes.

Graham Stuart:

In order to drive improvements, Ofgem conducted a market compliance review in addressing weaknesses related to prepayment meters and ensuring suppliers take action to address such issues. In response to continued concerns with prepayment meters, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently written to Ofgem and

suppliers to ask that they revisit such concerns and improve compliance including assessing suppliers' processes for installing prepayment meters.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[132450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that partner agencies promote the energy support to customers on pre-payment meters.

Graham Stuart:

The Government works with all relevant suppliers, and charities, consumer groups and other stakeholders to communicate the Energy Bills Support Scheme and the importance of customers checking post, emails and text for prepayment meter vouchers and taking action to redeem them.

■ Energy: Prices

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[131102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to provide funding to cover the environmental and social costs, including green levies, currently included in non-domestic energy bills.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme has provided an unprecedented level of support to non-domestic energy consumers during this crisis, and will continue to do so until March 2023. In addition to this, following an HMT-led review into the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will run from April until March 2024, which will continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers.

■ Government Office for Technology Transfer: Innovation

Chi Onwurah:

[\[132388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 118994 on Innovation: Public Expenditure, what specific (a) remit, (b) funding and (c) legislative powers the Office for Technology Transfer has to directly lead innovation and cross-governmental research and development.

George Freeman:

The Government Office for Technology Transfer does not possess a mandate, funding, or specific legislative powers to directly lead innovation or cross-government research and development. Its role is to support public sector organisations to identify, protect and exploit their knowledge assets to deliver financial, social, and economic benefits for the UK economy and the UK taxpayer.

■ Hospices: Wales

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[131321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of energy support for hospices (a) now and (b) from April 2023; and whether he has had discussions with the Welsh Government on the impact of the increase in energy bills on hospices in Wales.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that eligible hospices are protected from excessively 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 hospices. Both energy schemes apply across all of the United Kingdom, including Wales. The Government will continue to engage with devolved administrations in its design and implementation plans for the new scheme.

■ Iron and Steel: Employment

Bill Esterson:

[\[131197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 120907 on Iron and Steel: Employment, what assessment he has made of the causes for the decline in jobs in (a) steel production and (b) the steel production supply chain.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The answer I gave the Hon. Member on 17th January to Question [120907](#) shows there has been an increase in the estimated number of people employed in basic iron and steel between 2010 and 2020.

There are a series of acute global challenges for steel including steel overcapacity, unfair subsidies and dumping, and global impacts on raw material and energy costs from the pandemic and Russia's barbaric invasion of Ukraine.

However, the Government remains committed to working with the industry to support its transition to a competitive, sustainable, and low carbon future, supporting local economic growth and levelling-up.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Bill Esterson:

[\[131201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a closer partnership between the Government and the UK steel industry.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government engages regularly with the UK steel sector, trade unions and devolved administrations to develop a viable long-term future for the UK steel

industry. This two-way engagement is very important, particularly in the current globally challenging economic conditions.

I held a call with members of the steel sector on 6th December, met with Community Trade Union on the 24 January and attended the All Party Parliamentary Group (with sector representatives present) on the 25 January. I am due to meet soon with UK Steel, and I plan to hold the next steel sector call in February.

■ **Leisure and Swimming Pools: Energy Bills Discount Scheme**

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[132541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has held recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the inclusion of (a) swimming pools and (b) leisure centres in the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has taken a consistent approach to identifying the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for 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. BEIS has worked closely with key Whitehall Departments, including DCMS, and will engage with them in the design and implementation of the scheme.

■ **Liberty Steel: Redundancy**

Bill Esterson:

[\[131199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January 2023 to Question 122127 on Liberty Steel: Redundancy, whether his Department plans to provide financial intervention in the case of Liberty Steel.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

I recognise this is a difficult time for workers at Liberty Steel and affected employees be able to access our broad range of support including JobCentre Plus, through its Rapid Response Service.

BEIS officials and Ministers are in regular contact with representatives from Liberty Steel and the trade unions and continue to monitor the situation closely.

Any use of taxpayers money to support individual businesses needs to go through thorough due diligence and scrutiny processes, including on the financial governance of any potential funding recipient.

It is for Liberty to manage the future of its business, and we hope the company succeeds with its plans to continue on a sustainable basis.

■ Refuges: Energy

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[131223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of domestic abuse refugees that have accessed Government support with energy bills.

Graham Stuart:

Refuges that are on a domestic electricity contract benefit from the Energy Bills Support Scheme and the Energy Price Guarantee. Refugees that have a non-domestic electricity contract benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[131224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the adequacy of Government support with energy bills for domestic abuse refugees.

Graham Stuart:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business talks to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department regularly on a wide range of issues.

■ Renewable Energy

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[131104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to take steps consult on long-term options for energy levies and obligations.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is committed to ensuring the costs of the UK's energy transition are fair and affordable for all users. Exposure to volatile global gas prices underscores the importance of the UK's plan to build a strong, home-grown renewable energy sector and the Government is looking at a range of options for longer term market reform.

The Government is providing robust support for households, through the Energy Price Guarantee and the targeted support for the most vulnerable households, and for businesses via the Energy Bills Relief Scheme until March 2023 and the Energy Bills Discount Scheme until March 2024.

■ Small Businesses: Battersea

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[128713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support small businesses in Battersea in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Businesses in Battersea will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, the cut to fuel duty for 12 months and raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000. The Energy Bill Relief and Energy Bill Discount Schemes will protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter. The Autumn Statement, announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

■ **Small Businesses: Coventry****Colleen Fletcher:**[\[131265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many small and medium-sized enterprises in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry have received Government funding for support during the cost of living crisis.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Businesses in Coventry will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, the cut to fuel duty for 12 months and raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000.

The Energy Bill Relief and Energy Bill Discount Schemes will protect SMEs from high energy costs over the winter. The Autumn Statement announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

The Government is providing financial support – 198 SMEs in Coventry North East have received Start Up loans to the value of £1,920,907 and 504 SMEs in Coventry to the value of £5,124,978.

■ **Warm Home Discount Scheme****Naz Shah:**[\[125391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to provide support to people whose property was previously eligible for a Warm Home Discount payment but is no longer eligible and has a low energy performance certificate rating.

Graham Stuart:

Households not receiving rebates under the Warm Home Discount may still be able to receive assistance under the Industry Initiatives element of the scheme. This can include benefit entitlement checks, financial assistance, debt-write off, energy advice as well as energy efficiency measures. Over 327,000 households were helped under that route last winter.

For longer-lasting reductions in their energy bills, low-income households may be eligible for energy efficiency measures through government schemes including the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Home Upgrade Grant. Over 39% of households in Bradford West have benefitted from energy efficiency measures installed under ECO since 2013.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Disability

Naz Shah:

[125390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Warm Home Discount helpline is accessible for users with disabilities.

Graham Stuart:

Ofcom requires all landline and mobile telephone communications providers to provide a number of services for customers with disabilities, including access to an approved text relay service. The Warm Home Discount helpline has operators trained in taking calls from text relay services. The helpline also has a step-by-step Interactive Voice Response interface at the beginning of calls to help users navigate the service.

In addition to the telephone service, users can write to the Warm Home Discount helpline at: 110552 Warm Home Discount Scheme, PO Box 26965, Glasgow, G1 9BW.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Wales

Ben Lake:

[128696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of households that are eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme in Wales.

Graham Stuart:

The Government estimates that around 180,000 to 200,000 households in Wales will have received a Warm Home Discount rebate by the end of March this year. The Government does not yet have precise figures as the Warm Home Discount helpline remains open and continues to take calls to identify further households eligible for a rebate. More precise figures will be available after the scheme year has ended.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Holiday Leave

Chris Stephens:

[R] [132459]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

Jeremy Quin:

There is no central policy on buying/selling leave. Departments may consider introducing this benefit under their own delegated authority.

Cabinet Office does not currently offer a buying/selling annual leave scheme.

■ Death: Statistics**Andrew Bridgen:** [\[131174\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Office for National Statistics stopped issuing mortality by vaccination status date statistics on 31 May 2022.

Andrew Bridgen: [\[131175\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when mortality by vaccination status data will be issued for (a) all of 2022 and (b) January 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 24 January is attached.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response to 131174/5 [\[PQ131174 131175 \(1\) \(1\).pdf\]](#)

■ Government Departments: ICT**Chi Onwurah:** [\[132401\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 25 January 2023 to Question 125341 on Government Departments: ICT, where cloud providers publish information on their investment activities in the UK.

Alex Burghart:

While there is no statutory requirement for cloud providers to publish information on their investment activities in the UK, they regularly publish a range of information in the public domain, for example on company websites and blogs.

■ Nadhim Zahawi**Dan Carden:** [\[131349\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Prime Minister will publish the remit of the investigation by the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards into the Right Hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon.

Jeremy Quin:

The Prime Minister asked the Independent Adviser to investigate this matter, establish the facts and advise on compliance with the Ministerial Code. The Independent Adviser's findings have subsequently been published on GOV.UK and sets out the circumstances and facts.

■ Prime Minister: Aviation**Beth Winter:** [\[127920\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the official business travel cost to the public purse was of the flights taken by the Prime Minister and officials from London to (a) Leeds on 9 January 2023, (b) Inverness on 12 January 2023 and (c) Blackpool on 19 January 2023.

Beth Winter:

[\[127921\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) officials and (b) advisers accompanied the Prime Minister on flights from London to (a) Leeds on 9 January 2023, (b) Inverness on 12 January 2023 and (c) Blackpool on 19 January 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to PQ 120061.

It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to publish granular information relating to the official movements of protected individuals and those accompanying them within the United Kingdom.

Beth Winter:

[\[128721\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the (a) scope one, (b) scope two and (c) scope three carbon dioxide equivalent emissions for the flights taken by the Prime Minister and officials from London to (i) Leeds on 9 January 2023, (ii) Inverness on 12 January 2023 and (iii) Blackpool on 19 January 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

This information is not centrally held.

■ **Yevgeny Prigozhin**

Dan Carden:

[\[132408\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has had recent discussions with the (a) Prime Minister and (b) Chancellor of the Exchequer on Yevgeny Prigozhin and sanctions; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office is not responsible for sanctions placed on Russian nationals. I refer the hon. Member to the urgent question answered by the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury on 25 January.

DEFENCE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[903343\]](#)

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

Dr Andrew Morrison:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) fully recognises that the provision of safe, good quality and well-maintained accommodation is essential to operational output, and providing such accommodation is one of the MOD's top priorities.

In the last seven years, MOD has invested more than 936 million in SFA improvements and currently just under 97% of MOD Service Family Accommodation (SFA) meet or exceed the Government's Decent Homes Standard. However, we are

looking to go further and the 2022-23 improvement programme is based on a funding level of £176 million which will also improve the thermal efficiency of homes.

Ruth Edwards: [\[903344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Stanford Hall is a state of the art facility that rehabilitates our most seriously injured and I had the opportunity to speak to staff and patients when I visited last week .

The Government has committed funding to an NHS-led National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) with plans for the facility to be operational by Autumn 2024. The NRC will be located in the Stanford Hall estate enabling the sharing of expertise and the potential use of specialist facilities available at the DMRC.

Afzal Khan: [\[903352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help secure orders for the UK's shipbuilding supply chain.

Alex Chalk:

The National Shipbuilding Office regularly engages with UK shipbuilding supply chain companies to understand their issues and works with project teams across Government to maximise opportunities wherever possible. In Defence, the Royal Navy fleet provides a range of opportunities for the UK shipbuilding supply chain, for example in advanced technology, navigation and weapons systems.

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Luke Pollard: [\[128716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the quality of service personnel and family accommodation for personnel based at Robertson Barracks in Norfolk.

Alex Chalk:

I will write to the hon. Member with a full response as soon as the information is available.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[132299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the overall standard of accommodation offered to UK Armed Forces personnel.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) fully recognises that the provision of safe, good quality and well-maintained accommodation is essential to operational output, and providing such accommodation is one of the MOD's top priorities.

Just under 97% of MOD Service Family Accommodation meet or exceed the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Only these properties are allocated to Service families. In addition, they meet statutory and mandatory housing safety requirements.

■ Challenger Tanks

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[132296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to restock support equipment for Challenger 2.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[132297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the resilience within the Challenger 2 supply chain.

Alex Chalk:

The Department routinely assesses supply chains and stock levels to support all our equipment platforms.

Detailed analysis has been completed to protect the readiness of Challenger 2 and to ensure the delivery of Challenger 3.

■ Defence Equipment: Procurement

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[132519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to replenish the UK's stock of (a) armoured vehicles (b) stormer vehicles (c) underwater mine-hunting vehicles and (d) sea king helicopters donated in military aid to Ukraine.

Alex Chalk:

The UK is proud to be leading the way in our support to Ukraine. A wide variety of Military Equipment has been either granted in kind or rapidly procured for Ukraine by the UK. Some of the equipment granted from our own stocks will be replenished through contracts with suppliers, but other equipment does not require replacing as it is nearing the end of its in-service life.

For the Army, replenishment of armoured vehicles will reflect the Future Soldier structure, which will be built around a digitally networked combination of Ajax, Boxer, Challenger 3, AH64E, long range precision fires and un-crewed aerial systems. Stormer replenishment will form part of the future Land Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) programme.

Work is ongoing to replace the underwater mine-hunting vehicles granted to Ukraine. The Sea King helicopters will not be replenished as these have been replaced in service by Merlin Mk4.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

Bill Esterson:

[131202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of how many jobs will be created in Spain as a result of the UK's Fleet Solid Support ship contract.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 21 November 2022 to Question number 88812 to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey).

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Employment [\[88812 - Fleet Solid Support Ships Employment.docx\]](#)

■ HMS Bristol

Julian Knight:

[129968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for HMS Bristol following its decommissioning in 2020.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my noble Friend, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie DL) on 15 November 2022 to Question HL3303 in the House of Lords.

Attachments:

1. HMS Bristol [\[HL3303 - HMS Bristol.docx\]](#)

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review

Dr Matthew Offord:

[126606]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if it remains his Department's policy to refresh the UK's Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy.

Mr Ben Wallace:

On 21 September 2022, the Government announced its intention to refresh the Integrated Review. This work is being lead by Professor John Bew. We expect this work to be completed ahead of the Treasury's Spring Statement.

■ Ministry of Defence: Departmental Responsibilities

John Healey:

[132285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and which (a) boards and (b) committees he sits on.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I sit on a number of Boards and Committees across Defence, including:

Senior Appointments Committee Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Commissioners meeting Ministerial Covenant & Veterans Board Air Force Board

Admiralty Board Army Board Defence Board Defence Council National Security Council National Security Council subcommittee - Nuclear Deterrence and Security National Security Council subcommittee - Resilience National Science and Technology Council Home Affairs Committee

■ Ministry of Defence: Equality

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[128663](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We are committed to making the step changes required to create a more inclusive environment, enabling everyone, irrespective of background, to deliver our Defence outputs, enhance our operational effectiveness and better defend and represent the nation we serve.

Policy and people decisions are only implemented following the satisfactory completion of an Equality Analysis which analyses any impact on staff, depending on their protected characteristics. The Ministry of Defence publishes a biannual diversity dashboard report on its civilian personnel. This information is published as Official Statistics, the latest of which provides data as at 1 October 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-diversity-dashboard-october-2022/civilian-personnel-biannual-diversity-dashboard-report-october-2022>

■ Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[132472](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 January 2023 to Question 122497 to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Mr Pollard):

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-13/122497> Staff were made aware they can sell annual leave via routine internal communication channels, such as the Defence Intranet and newsletters.

Attachments:

1. Ministry of Defence: Holiday Leave [[UIN 122497.docx](#)]

■ Ministry of Defence: Minimum Wage

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[129900](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Basing results on the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates published on the GOV.UK website, across the Ministry of Defence (MOD) (including Arms Length Bodies), there are 83 employees who receive a salary that equates to exactly £9.50 per hour. This represents a proportion of 0.14% of the MOD population.

■ **RAF Halton: Heating****John Healey:**[\[131124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many days RAF Halton has been without heating in each of the last 12 months.

Alex Chalk:

The table below shows how many days individual assets at RAF Halton, have been without heating. An asset can be an individual radiator, room, or floor.

MONTH	NUMBER OF DAYS
April	13
May	0
June	0
July	10
August	31
September	30
October	31
November	30
December	31

Data pre-April 2022 is not held centrally in the format requested and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Satellite Communications****Sir Robert Buckland:**[\[129814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK's satellite communications capacity.

Alex Chalk:

Current operational capacity demands are actively managed and assessed on a monthly basis to ensure that Defence's requirements are continuously met. Future capacity needs are extensively modelled and subject to regular review, which informs the on-going SATCOM delivery programmes.

In formulating this response, it is assumed that 'communications capacity' refers to bandwidth.

■ **USA: Nuclear Weapons**

Caroline Lucas:

[131195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the US government has made a commitment to pay the costs arising from a nuclear accident related to the (a) siting and (b) transportation of US nuclear weapons in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

While it remains longstanding UK and NATO policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at a given location, the UK has provisions for the US to base nuclear weapons in the UK and/or to fly them through UK airspace in support of NATO's nuclear mission.

Accordingly, bilateral arrangements are in place for responding to an emergency, accident or significant incident involving US nuclear weapons or nuclear components in the UK, including its internal waters and territorial sea. Costs ensuing from such an event would be handled in accordance with those arrangements, and the provisions of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 and NATO Status of Forces Agreement which apply to all US forces based in the UK.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Community Relations**

Mike Amesbury:

[131442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the Community Life Survey 2021-2022.

Stuart Andrew:

The Community Life Survey 2021-2022 is due to be published in February 2023. Further details on the exact publication date will be released by the end of January at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/community-life-survey>

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [128652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code; and whether that monitoring data gathered is shared with union representatives.

Julia Lopez:

DCMS routinely collects the data set out in section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code (CSMC) and uses it to inform the department's Diversity & Inclusion strategy. There is no obligation to share this information with Trade Union

representatives. However, DCMS regularly shares D&I data, equality impact assessments and other relevant information in order to support engagement and discussion with the unions on areas of policy. Detailed information on the Civil Service workforce is also collected and published centrally as part of the Annual Civil Service Employment Statistics.

DCMS's D&I strategy is aligned to the new Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 which recognises our success and builds on this good work to encourage a broader range of people into the Civil Service to give depth to our understanding of contemporary society in the United Kingdom. It provides the necessary framing for diversity and inclusion activity in the Civil Service as part of our wider workforce strategy, and through that, how the Civil Service delivers for its people, the government and our citizens.

A link to the Civil Service statistics can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-statistics>

■ Public Libraries

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[903263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps her Department has taken to help support public libraries.

Stuart Andrew:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport works closely with organisations across the sector to support and champion public libraries in England. Through the first round of the Libraries Improvement Fund, we are investing £5 million in 25 library services to upgrade their buildings and technology, equipping them to meet the changing needs of local communities. Decisions regarding the second round of the Fund – which will offer another £5 million of investment – will be made shortly.

Additionally, in September 2022 the Government appointed Baroness Sanderson of Welton as chairman of a new advisory panel to help develop a new strategy to make sure public libraries are providing the best possible service for their communities. More detail can be found [here](#). To date she has had numerous meetings with organisations with an interest in public libraries' work, and has led two roundtable sessions. The first on 13 January in Nottinghamshire focused on the contribution public libraries make to cultural and creative enrichment and the second on 27 January in Ipswich discussed their contribution to health and wellbeing. A further seven roundtables will be held between February and May, in libraries across England, each focusing on a specific theme, based on the seven Strategic Outcomes in the [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021](#), plus sessions on governance and innovation.

■ Public Libraries: Closures

Barbara Keeley:

[132306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many public libraries have closed in England since (a) 2000 and (b) 2010.

Stuart Andrew:

This information is not held by the Department. Arts Council England collects data from local authorities and publishes a basic dataset of information on public libraries in England. The libraries basic dataset 2021 shows the number of static libraries in England (statutory and non-statutory) from April 2010 to 31 December 2021 and also includes information on permanent library closures. It can be found at

https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/search?query=basic+dataset&sort_by=titles

Based on this dataset, DCMS estimates that around 230 libraries have permanently closed in the period 1 April 2010 to 31 December 2021 and not been relocated or replaced.

The libraries basic dataset 2022 will be published by Arts Council England later this year.

■ Public Libraries: Opening Hours

Barbara Keeley:

[132307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the extent to which average public library opening hours have changed in the last (a) three, (b) five and (c) 10 years.

Stuart Andrew:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service which meets local needs. It is for each local authority to consider carefully how best to meet those needs, including consideration of library opening hours. Any assessment of library opening hours and their change over time is a matter for the local authority.

■ Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994

Stella Creasy:

[132348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, whether it is her policy to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Return of Cultural Objects Regulations 1994.

Stuart Andrew:

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is part of the Government's commitment to taking the necessary steps to put the UK statute book on a sustainable footing following our exit from the EU. The Bill will make it easier to amend, repeal or replace retained EU law, in the best interests of the UK.

Assessments of the impact of amending, repealing or replacing areas of retained EU law are currently in progress and we will announce our plans in due course.

■ **Swimming Pools: Energy**

Rachael Maskell:

[132453]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will set up an emergency support fund to help provide support to public swimming pools in the context of the increases in energy costs.

Stuart Andrew:

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

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

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

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

■ **Theatres: Energy**

Barbara Keeley:

[132310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has provided funding for energy reduction measures in theatres for reducing energy costs in winter 2023.

Stuart Andrew:

HM Government provided support through the winter to all non-domestic energy users via the £18 billion package for businesses through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which included theatres, arts venues, and related organisations. The scheme continues to provide valuable assistance to organisations until the end of March when the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme comes into effect for all non-domestic customers, which applies to energy usage from 1 April 2023 to 31 March

2024. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayers' exposure to volatile energy markets.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, via its arm's-length bodies the Theatres Trust and Arts Council England, is supporting theatres to identify ways to improve energy efficiencies via use of the 'Theatre Green Book'.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Cost of Living

Marsha De Cordova:

[128712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide targeted financial support for voluntary and faith groups in the context of the cost of the living crisis.

Stuart Andrew:

With government support, voluntary and faith groups have shown significant resilience over the past few years, and will again be crucial in supporting communities and households through this challenging period.

Government is supporting all organisations, including those across the civil society sector, with their energy bills. This support has now been extended until March 2024 via the Energy Bills Discount Scheme. Wholesale gas prices have now fallen to levels just before Putin's invasion of Ukraine and have almost halved since the current scheme was announced. This scheme provides long term certainty for organisations and reflects how the scale of the challenge has changed since September last year.

DCMS will keep engaging constructively across the civil society sector and colleagues in government to monitor the impact of rising costs.

EDUCATION

■ Academies: Admissions

Chi Onwurah:

[132392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of academy trusts admissions policies and oversubscription criteria on the ability of local authorities to ensure school places for all children following periods of population growth.

Nick Gibb:

In 2022, the Government published research by Isos Partnership looking at how Local Authorities are ensuring sufficient places and supporting vulnerable children. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-provision-for-school-places-and-support-for-vulnerable-children>.

Local Authorities have a statutory duty, under Section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that there are sufficient primary and secondary school places for all children living in their area. The Department provides capital funding through the Basic Need grant to support Local Authorities to meet their statutory duty to provide

sufficient school places, based on their own forecast data. They can use this funding to provide places in new schools or through expansions of existing schools, and can work with any school in their local area, including academies and free schools.

Trusts are expected to work collaboratively with Local Authorities, dioceses and other schools in the area, to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to place planning and delivery and support Local authorities to meet their legal duty by providing additional places where they are needed. The Department engages with Local Authorities on a regular basis to review their plans for creating additional places and to consider alternatives where necessary. When Local Authorities are experiencing difficulties, the Department will provide support and advice.

■ Department for Education: Equality

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code; and whether that monitoring data gathered is shared with union representatives.

Nick Gibb:

The Department considers the impact of its workforce policies and processes by routinely carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). The Department discusses the impact of changes to internal policies with the Departmental Trade Union Side (DTUS), and considers their comments when finalising EQIAs. 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code does not place an obligation on Departments to share this information with their representative trade unions.

The Department has data dashboards, including a Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard updated quarterly, to facilitate monitoring of trends regarding Human Resources activity and protected characteristics.

The Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard is available to all Departmental staff, including trade union representatives.

The Department shares data with DTUS which is relevant to the areas being discussed with them each month, or following ad hoc requests.

■ Food Technology

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[131117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what percentage of schools teach Domestic Science; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The subject of domestic science is not a part of the current curriculum. Aspects of the subject have been incorporated into the food technology part of the design and technology curriculum, and the healthy lifestyles topic within the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.

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

As of November 2021, of the 2,915 state-funded secondary schools that supplied data on the subjects taught by teachers, there were 1,472 schools that reported at least one teacher teaching food technology within the design and technology curriculum at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. This equates to 51% of schools that supplied data.

There were 1,961 schools that reported at least one teacher teaching PSHE at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. This equates to 67% of schools that supplied data.

There were 2,347 schools that reported at least one teacher teaching either food technology as part of the design and technology curriculum and/or PSHE at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. This equates to 81% of schools that supplied data.

Subject teachers are any teacher timetabled to teach the subject for any period in a typical week in November and do not necessarily have a specific post-A level qualification. This timetabling does not cover an entire year of teaching. If there are variations in timetabling across the year, this is not covered in the data available to the Department.

■ Further Education

Ian Byrne:

[131429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) community and (b) private training providers holding traineeship contracts are able to access 16-19 study programmes.

Robert Halfon:

The department is committed to providing a comprehensive skills offer for employers and individuals. We have decided to integrate the Traineeship programme into the 16 to 19 study programme and adult education provision from 1 August 2023. All the elements of the Traineeship programme will continue to be funded for 16 to 19-year-olds, as part of the national 16 to 19 study programme, and for adults through the adult education budget (AEB).

Providers with access to funding, including further education colleges and independent training providers, can choose to continue to offer Traineeship programmes for young people who need support to get into work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

In areas where the AEB has been devolved, Mayoral Combined Authorities and Greater London Authority will decide on how best to support young adults in their areas.

The department is continuing to work with the sector and combined authorities to ensure there is a smooth transition and there are no gaps in provision, so that young people can continue to gain the skills they need to support them into apprenticeships, work, or further learning.

■ **Higher Education: Liability**

James Morris:

[129764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a statutory duty of care for higher education institutions to students aged 18 and over.

Robert Halfon:

The mental health and wellbeing of students, including suicide prevention, is a government priority. The department has been working closely with higher education (HE) providers and health colleagues to ensure that students are well supported during their time at university. We expect all HE providers to take suicide prevention with the utmost seriousness, focusing on prevention, providing information and places for students to find help, actively identifying students at risk, and intervening with swift support when needed.

HE providers are autonomous organisations, independent from the government. HE providers have a general duty of care to deliver educational and pastoral services to the standard of an ordinarily competent institution and, in carrying out these services, they are expected to act reasonably to protect the health, safety and welfare of their students. HE providers have a duty of care to not cause harm to their students through the university's own actions.

Students with disabilities, including mental health impairments, are protected under the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits discrimination and imposes a duty on HE providers to make reasonable adjustments where disabled students are put at a substantial disadvantage.

The NHS has statutory responsibility for delivering mental health services to the whole population, including students.

We work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Office for Students (OfS), and the HE sector to support the student population. We have asked the OfS to distribute £15 million of funding this year as additional support to help students with the transition from schools and colleges to university. This is also to fund partnerships between universities and local NHS services to provide pathways of care for university students.

The department has been vocal in our support for the University Mental Health Charter, led by Student Minds and developed in collaboration with students, staff, and partner organisations. The Charter aims to drive up standards of practice across the HE sector. 60 universities on the Charter Programme form part of a UK-wide practice sharing network with access to events and opportunities to come together to improve their whole university approach to student and staff mental health. Programme

members can also work towards the Charter Award, an accreditation scheme which recognises universities that demonstrate excellent practice.

The department has appointed university Vice-Chancellor Edward Peck as HE's first ever Student Support Champion. His role is to provide sector leadership and promoting effective practice in areas including mental health and information sharing. Professor Peck is engaging with families who have suffered bereavement due to students taking their own life during their time at university.

■ Nurses: Students

Matt Western:

[\[130025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of medical students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals.

Matt Western:

[\[130026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, how many nursing students completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22.

Matt Western:

[\[130027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of nursing students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals.

Matt Western:

[\[130029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, how many dentistry students completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22.

Matt Western:

[\[130030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of dentistry students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals.

Matt Western:

[\[130031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22,

published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of veterinary students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals.

Robert Halfon:

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

The table below shows the number of students that have qualified from their first degree from a UK HEP in a medical related subject, by domicile.

Full-person-equivalent ¹ First Degree qualifiers in select subjects at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEPs) by domicile, in the academic year 2021/22

SUBJECT AREA ²	UK DOMICILED ³ QUALIFIERS	NON-UK DOMICILED ³ QUALIFIERS	TOTAL QUALIFIERS	PERCENTAGE THAT ARE UK DOMICILED ³ QUALIFIERS
Dentistry (CAH01-1,210 01-04)		100	1,310	92.2%
Medicine (CAH01-8,365 01-01, CAH01-01- 02, CAH01-01-03)		1,285	9,650	86.7%
Nursing and midwifery (CAH02-04)	23,545	900	24,445	96.3%
Veterinary sciences (CAH05- 01)	1,405	320	1,725	81.6%

1. Counts are based on full-person-equivalents. Where a student is studying more than one subject, they are apportioned between the subjects that make up their course. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding conventions. Numbers may not sum due to rounding. Guidance can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/students#rounding-and-suppression-strategy>.
2. Information on qualifiers by principal HECOS code is published by HESA as part of their Open Data Pages can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-54>. Data for 2021/22 will be added to this table on 31 January 2023.
3. Domicile refers to the permanent home address of the student prior to entry to the course.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Matt Western:

[130000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the non-attendance statistics were for all secondary school children resident in Warwick and Leamington in each year for which data is available since 2019.

Nick Gibb:

The Department publishes figures from the school census on absence from state funded schools in England based on the location of the school, not the place of residence of pupils. The latest full academic year figures are for the 2020/21 academic year and are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

The attached spreadsheet provides absence statistics for state funded secondary schools in Warwick and Leamington constituency during the 2018/19 and 2020/21 academic years. Figures are not available for the 2019/20 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

1. 130000_table [\[PQ130000_secondary_abs.xlsx\]](#)

Matt Western:

[130001]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the non-attendance statistics were for all primary school children resident in Warwick and Leamington in each year for which data is available since 2019.

Nick Gibb:

The Department publishes figures from the school census on absence from state funded schools in England based on the location of the school, not the place of residence of pupils. The latest full academic year figures are for 2020/21 and are available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

The attached table gives absence statistics for state funded primary schools in Warwick and Leamington constituency during the 2018/19 and 2020/21 academic years. Figures are not available for the 2019/20 academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

1. 130001_table [\[PQ130001_primary_abs.xlsx\]](#)

■ Relationships and Sex Education: Reviews

Sarah Champion:

[131220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's timeframe is for reviewing relationship and sex education guidance; and what the process will be for that review.

Nick Gibb:

In the 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' statutory guidance 2019, the Department committed to reviewing the guidance three years from when it was first required to be taught in September 2020. The Department is now developing plans to review the guidance and, subject to its analysis, the Department intends to undertake a public consultation before publishing revised guidance.

School Meals**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[132528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of food price inflation on the (a) nutritional value and (b) portion size of school meals.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises the cost pressures that some schools and suppliers may be facing, and we are holding regular meetings with other Government Departments and with food industry representatives, covering a variety of issues including public sector food supplies.

Schools will receive an additional £2 billion in each of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, as a result of the 2022 Autumn Statement. The core schools' budget, which covers schools' day-to-day running costs, including schools' energy bills and the costs of providing income-related free school meals, has risen from £49.8 billion in 2021/22 to £53.8 billion in 2022/23 and will continue to rise to £57.3 billion in 2023/24 and £58.8 billion in 2024/25. By 2024/25, funding per pupil will have risen to its highest ever level in real terms. These increases provide support to schools to deal with the impact of inflation on their budgets.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) are funded through a direct grant to schools. In June 2022, the Government announced an increase to the per pupil meal rate in UIFSM to £2.41. This was backdated, recognising the cost pressures schools and some suppliers may be experiencing.

The standards for school food are set out in the requirements for school food regulations 2014 and are designed to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need throughout the school day. Schools also have flexibility under the Standards to substitute food and regularly update and change menus. They may make changes if ingredients or meals are not readily available.

It is for schools and caterers to decide what is an appropriate portion and to balance the food served across the school week. Guidance to accompany the School Food Standards includes guidance on portion sizes and food groups.

■ School Rebuilding Programme

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[131118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria are being used to determine when project delivery will begin for schools as part of the school rebuilding programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[131119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when project delivery at the Milestone School in Tewkesbury under the school rebuilding programme will commence; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The 239 schools that were announced in December 2022 as part of the School Rebuilding Programme, including The Milestone School, will enter delivery at a rate of approximately 50 per year, over a five-year period, from 2023.

The Department is currently undertaking due diligence on these schools prior to scheduling them, with schools prioritised for delivery according to the condition need of their buildings, readiness to proceed, and efficiency of delivery. The Department plans to write to all Responsible Bodies before the end of January 2023 to update on timescales and set out next steps.

■ Schools: Asbestos

Simon Lightwood:

[128738]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support schools with costs associated with the removal of asbestos from school buildings where it is deemed necessary due to the repair or development of those buildings.

Nick Gibb:

Well-maintained, safe school buildings are a priority for the Department. The Department takes the issue of asbestos in schools seriously and is committed to supporting schools, Local Authorities and Academy Trusts to fulfil their duty to manage asbestos safely.

The Department has allocated over £13 billion for improving school buildings since 2015, including £1.8 billion committed for the 2022/23 financial year. This funding can be used for asbestos removal during the completion of works when it is required.

The Department expects all Local Authorities, governing bodies and Academy Trusts to have robust plans in place to manage asbestos in school buildings effectively, in line with their legal duties. To support this, the Department published updated guidance on 'Managing asbestos in your School' in 2020, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/asbestos-management-in-schools>.

The Department follows expert advice from the Health and Safety Executive that as long as asbestos-containing materials are in good condition, well protected, and are unlikely to be worked on, it is usually safer to manage them in place. Asbestos is

often removed as part of wider work to improve or replace buildings. Asbestos containing materials should also be removed if they are likely to be disturbed during routine maintenance work or daily use of the building, and will release fibres, without being easily repaired and protected.

■ Schools: Heating

Rachael Maskell: [128685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has provided recent guidance to schools on (a) the health and safety implications for and (b) school opening when school heating systems fail.

Rachael Maskell: [128686]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to ensure that schools choose the most sustainable heating system when replacing those systems.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has not provided recent guidance to schools on the health and safety implications for failed heating systems.

Responsible bodies are required to carry out regular inspections on their building and systems. Where necessary, they should seek professional advice. If systems have failed, or are at risk of failure, a risk assessment should be made on keeping the school open.

The Health and Safety Executive have issued guidance on minimum temperatures, which is available here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/the-law.htm#:~:text=Minimum%20workplace%20temperature,work%20involves%20rigorous%20physical%20effort>.

The Condition Improvement Fund round for 2023/24 that closed to applications from eligible schools and sixth-form colleges in December 2022, gave high priority to projects replacing expired oil and coal boilers with low carbon alternatives to prevent closure. Applicants were advised to submit an environmental sustainability statement to achieve maximum marks on their applications.

The Department has published guidance on best practice for sustainable heating replacements within its Output Specification for new and refurbished buildings. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employers-requirements-part-b-generic-design-brief>.

■ Schools: Inspections

Tom Randall: [131446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what percentage of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted were inspected again within four years as recommended by Department for Education guidance in (a) Gedling, (b) Nottinghamshire, (c) the East Midlands and (d) England.

Nick Gibb:

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

Schools: Waste Management**Paula Barker:**[\[130062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Waste Management Policy of schools in England; and if she will make an estimate of the number of schools that have policies in place to ensure that waste materials are recycled.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not currently collect data on waste management policies of schools in England. Due to the different services provided for recycling by Local Authorities, it is not possible to provide a national estimate.

In the sustainability and climate change strategy for the education system, the Department has set out its commitment to supporting schools to align with the Resources and Waste Strategy to reduce all waste, moving away from single use items and towards re-usable alternatives, wherever possible.

The Department will be supporting schools to establish climate action plans, which will set out the action they will take to enable greater sustainability in how their school operates, including waste management.

Teachers: Sick Leave**Bridget Phillipson:**[\[131167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers took sickness absence in each local authority in England in this academic year as of 24 January 2023.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[131168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teacher working days were recorded as a sickness absence in each local authority in England in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[131169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teacher working days were recorded as a sickness absence in each local authority in England in this academic year as of 24 January 2023.

Bridget Phillipson:[\[131170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of teacher working days recorded as a sickness absence as a result of mental ill health in each local authority in England in each academic year since 2014-15, broken down by local authority.

Bridget Phillipson:**[131171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers in England have taken sickness absence of more than 14 days citing mental ill health or workplace stress, broken down by local authority, in each academic year since 2014-15 for which figures are available.

Nick Gibb:

Information on teacher sickness absence in the 2021/22 academic year will be published in June 2023.

The number of teacher working days recorded as a sickness absence as a result of mental ill health or workplace stress is not available.

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. This does not include the reason for the sickness absence. Each census collects data for absence from the previous academic year. The latest data available covers the academic year from September 2020 to August 2021.

In the 2020/21 academic year, 229,898 (45%) of teachers took sickness absence. The total number of working days lost to sickness absence was 1,971,300. 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/265803f1-a60a-4f1a-8af2-08dafb06f66e>.

Rachael Maskell:**[132403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing teachers who are unwell on days of industrial action in the NHS to self-certify as unwell and not seek a note from a doctor in order to help relieve pressures on the NHS.

Nick Gibb:

Sickness arrangements for teachers in England are covered by the 'Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales' (known as the Burgundy Book), and fall to individual employers to implement, which is normally the Local Authority or academy trust.

The vast majority of Local Authorities follow the terms of the Burgundy Book scheme, which is incorporated into their teachers' contracts of employment. In some Local Authorities, local agreements improve upon the Burgundy Book scheme. Teachers who work in academies or free schools may also be covered by different arrangements, particularly if they joined the academy or free school after it changed status.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution: Greater Manchester****Andrew Western:**[\[132573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she intends to respond to Clean Air Greater Manchester's proposal for an investment-led, non-charging clean air zone in that region; and whether it is her policy to support that proposal.

Rebecca Pow:

We have reviewed the proposals provided by Greater Manchester authorities. Local plans must ensure compliance with legal nitrogen dioxide limits is achieved in the shortest possible time, and at present there is insufficient evidence to enable us to assess if the proposals do so. We have requested further evidence from Greater Manchester authorities to enable us to consider their plans further.

■ Bees: Neonicotinoids**Geraint Davies:**[\[131109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to ban temporary approvals for the use of bee-toxic neonicotinoids.

Mark Spencer:

There is an established process for emergency authorisations, based upon the requirements in the legislation. Each application received is considered on its own merits.

The Government is fully persuaded that the widespread use of neonicotinoids should not be permitted. The emergency authorisation for the use of Cruiser SB on the 2023 sugar beet crop allows a single use of a neonicotinoid on a single crop under very strict conditions to mitigate risks to pollinators. Use of the product will only go ahead if there is forecast to be a virus incidence of 63% or above, as predicted by an established model. If this threshold is not met, use of the product is not permitted. This threshold has materially increased.

In 2020 (a year in which no neonicotinoid seed treatments were used) 25% of the national sugar beet crop was lost.

We have been clear that British Sugar and industry must move forward with plans for the development of alternative, sustainable approaches to protect crops from Yellow Virus, without the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments. This could include the development of resistant plant varieties, measures to improve seed germination and new practices for growers. The government is keen to see these plans progress at pace.

■ Camping Sites: Dartmoor National Park**Alex Sobel:****[126794]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to allow wild camping to take place in Dartmoor National Park.

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.

■ Cocoa and Chocolate Products (England) Regulations 2003**Stella Creasy:****[131182]**

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 Cocoa and Chocolate 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 Cocoa and Chocolate (England) Regulations 2003.

■ Compost: Peat**Daniel Zeichner:****[131323]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will publish an assessment of the potential (a) economic, (b) business, (c) environmental and (d) export impacts of the UK horticulture industry transitioning to peat-free growing mediums.

Trudy Harrison:

Our proposals to prohibit the sale of peat and peat containing products will deliver benefits in terms of carbon storage, protect habitats and biodiversity.

Defra consulted on its proposals on 18 December 2021 and published an Economic Impact Assessment at that time. The link to this updated assessment is provided below.

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/soils-and-peatlands/endingtheretailsaleofpeatinhorticulture/supporting_documents/Consultation%20Impact%20Assessment%20%20Ending%20the%20Retail%20Sale%20of%20Peat%20in%20Horticulture%20in%20England%20and%20Wales.pdf

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[131324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to provide (a) research and development and (b) other support to help the UK horticulture industry to transition to peat-free growing mediums.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the progress already made in transitioning to peat-free alternatives. We also recognise that certain sectors within the horticulture industry are encountering particular challenges and that is why our proposals will include specific, and time limited, exemptions for the professional horticulture sector.

We are currently co-funding with the horticultural sector monitoring of the composition of growing media (including peat) that is supplied for horticultural use. We continue to work and support the industry with the Responsible Sourcing Scheme for Growing Media, which allows manufacturers and retailers to make informed choices of growing media inputs to amateur or retail products.

We are also continuing to support research in this area, most recently with financial support to the Royal Horticultural Society's new £1 million, co-funded, five-year project to support the transition to peat-free. This project will research sustainable alternatives to peat in large-scale commercial settings.

■ **Curlews: Conservation**

Greg Smith:

[\[132605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust's findings in the document entitled A future for curlew that the curlew population declined by 17 per cent. per year without legal predator control and increased by 14 per cent. per year with legal predator control.

Greg Smith:

[\[132606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies Langholm Moor Demonstration Project's findings that when snares and other predator control methods are used, curlew numbers increased on average by 10 per cent per annum.

Trudy Harrison:

The management of predators, such as foxes and carrion crows, plays an important role in supporting the recovery of some of our most vulnerable species, particularly ground nesting birds including the curlew.

We have recently published an update on environmental land management schemes which confirms that we are exploring how actions to do with managing predatory species - when those species are impacting threatened species recovery - will be made available.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**Emily Thornberry:**[\[118879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the transaction for £1,567.63 on 14 December 2021 included in her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, how many members of Marine Management Organisation staff stayed at the Island Club Turks; and what the purpose was of that visit.

Mark Spencer:

Three members of the MMO Global Marine Team travelled to the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) under the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme. The Blue Belt programme aims to enhance protection of the marine environment in the UK's overseas territories. The TCI Government signed up to the programme in 2021 and formally announced this at World Ocean Day in 2022. The purpose of the visit was to meet with TCI Government Ministers and hold workshops with key stakeholders to scope support that the programme would provide to TCI.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Scottish Government and Welsh Government**Ruth Jones:**[\[126808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answers of 18 January 2023 to Question 117854 on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Scottish Government and Question 117853 on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Welsh Government, when she has met her counterparts in the (a) Welsh and (b) Scottish governments in the period since her appointment.

Mark Spencer:

The Secretary of State and Defra Ministers have met their counterparts in the devolved administrations on multiple occasions.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: South Tyneside**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[129841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much South Tyneside Council has returned to her Department from grants allocated in the last two years.

Mark Spencer:

South Tyneside Council has not returned anything to Defra from grants allocated in the last two years.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Written Questions**Jessica Morden:**[\[122090\]](#)

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

Mark Spencer:

Defra attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and correspondence, and officials seek to provide the highest level of service.

All departments have access to regular training led by the Parliamentary Capability Team through the Government Campus.

To complement the work of the Parliamentary Capability Team, Defra provides tailored training and advice for Defra staff specific to PQs and correspondence to drive up the quality and timeliness of our responses.

Response rates for 2022 are in the table below:

QUESTION TYPE	DUE FOR ANSWER	ANSWERED ON TIME	PERCENTAGE
Named Day	835	494	59%
Ordinary Written	1944	1213	62%
Total	2779	1707	61%

■ Environment Agency: Industrial Disputes**Tracey Crouch:**[\[128620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to work with the (a) Environment Agency and (b) trade unions to provide a settlement to end industrial action.

Rebecca Pow:

My Department works closely with the Environment Agency through the provision of its Corporate Services, including HR, to support it in developing a pay offer for its staff that whilst ensuring it meets the requirements of the government's pay guidance of the day. The Environment Agency, as a non-departmental public body, recognises trade unions for the purposes of collective bargaining including pay, and rightfully conducts its own relevant consultation and negotiations on such matters.

■ **Environment Protection: Standards**

Marsha De Cordova: **[130037]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps her Department has taken to meet its statutory targets on environment protection; and if she will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Environment Act 2021's statutory cycle of monitoring, planning and reporting ensures that Government will take early, regular steps to achieve targets and can be held to account with regular scrutiny from the Office for Environmental Protection and Parliament. The statutory cycle to drive short term progress sets out that:

1. the Government must have an Environmental Improvement Plan which sets out the steps it intends to take to improve the environment, and review it at least every five years;
2. the Government must report on progress towards achieving targets every year, the most recent of which can be found here - 25 Year Environment Plan: progress reports - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and
3. the Office for Environmental Protection is established and provides independent scrutiny of delivery.

Building on our Environment Act 2021 and its ambitious long-term targets, our Environmental Improvement Plan will soon set out the comprehensive action this Government will take to reverse the decline in nature, achieve our net zero goals and deliver cleaner air and water.

■ **Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999**

Stella Creasy: **[131183]**

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 Environmental (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

Trudy Harrison:

Defra is in the process of analysing and assessing its REUL stock to determine what should be preserved as part of domestic law, and what should be repealed, or amended. This work will determine how we use the powers in the Bill, including in relation to the Environmental (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

Defra has secured a clause in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to unlock the laws governing EIAs which are currently governed by retained EU law, including the Forestry EIA.

■ **Farmers: Suicide**

Nick Fletcher:

[\[128726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has taken recent steps with Cabinet colleagues to help reduce the rate of suicide of men in the farming community.

Mark Spencer:

Each and every suicide is a tragedy, with a devastating impact on families and communities and we are committed to doing all we can to prevent them.

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues about a range of issues and we continue to work together across Government, and with experts, to review our plans and ensure they are fit for the future.

We are investing an additional £57 million in suicide prevention by 2023/24 through the NHS Long Term Plan. Through this, all areas of the country are seeing investment to support local suicide prevention plans and the development of suicide bereavement services.

■ **Fish Farming: Animal Welfare**

Cat Smith:

[\[132451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2022 to Question 40832 on Fish Farming: Animal Welfare, when she expects to receive the advice of the Animal Welfare Committee on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing.

Mark Spencer:

We expect to receive the Animal Welfare Committee's advice by the end of March this year.

■ **Food: Public Sector**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[132525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of rises in the price of food on the provision of public sector food.

Mark Spencer:

Rising food prices are dependent on a combination of factors including agri-food import prices, domestic agricultural prices, domestic labour and manufacturing costs. Given sustained pressures, there is still uncertainty over when food price inflation will peak and begin to fall, but our expectations, supported by external evidence, are that this will be in the next few months. Defra is closely monitoring the situation and taking action to maintain an efficient food supply chain by mitigating against any potential burdens or friction which could otherwise drive-up consumer food prices.

Defra has well established ways of working with industry and across Government to gather evidence and monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains. Lead Government departments will be responsible for ensuring that they have sufficient evidence to show that major suppliers can fulfil their public sector food contracts. The Government Commercial Function has provided general guidance on handling inflationary pressures to Contracting Authorities.

■ **Food: Wholesale Trade**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[132526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of support available to UK food and drink wholesalers to assist the cost of living crisis.

Mark Spencer:

The Government recognises the impact rising prices are having on businesses. Businesses will have benefitted from the Government's £400 billion package of grants, loans, business relief, VAT discounts and a rent moratorium. In addition, at the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates. Defra is taking action to maintain an efficient food supply chain by mitigating against any potential burdens or friction which could otherwise drive-up consumer food prices. Given sustained pressures, there is still uncertainty over when food price inflation will peak and begin to fall, but our expectations, supported by external evidence, are that this will be in the next few months. We are closely monitoring the situation.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[132527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with UK food and drink wholesalers on the challenges faced by that sector.

Mark Spencer:

Alongside monitoring pressures affecting the food supply chain, Defra regularly engages with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors and individual food and drink wholesalers to understand the challenges affecting the sector.

■ **Government Departments: Environment Protection**

Emily Thornberry: [\[125288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to publish the Greening Government Commitments annual reports for (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Trudy Harrison:

The Greening Government Commitments 2020-21 annual report was delayed to reduce pressure on facilities teams across government, as a result of COVID-19. The

report will be published in early 2023. This will be the final report of the previous framework

The Greening Government Commitments 2021-22 annual report, the first report against the 2021-2025 framework, will be published later this year.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[128689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reason the Greening Government Commitments 2020 to 2021 report has not been published; and when the Government plans to publish it.

Trudy Harrison:

The Greening Government Commitments 2020-21 annual report was delayed to reduce pressure on facilities teams across government, as a result of COVID-19. We continue to make progress in reducing our environmental impacts and the report will be published in early 2023.

■ Paraquat: India

Navendu Mishra:

[\[131433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to ban the export of paraquat to India.

Mark Spencer:

The export of paraquat from Great Britain (GB) to India and other countries is regulated under the GB Prior Informed Consent (PIC) regulatory regime for the export and import of certain hazardous chemicals. The explicit consent of the importing country is required before export of paraquat can take place. This exchange of information that PIC provides allows the importing countries to make informed decisions on the import of those chemicals and on how to handle and use them safely. This process is kept under review.

Companies intending to export paraquat and other listed chemicals from the GB must notify the importing country via the exporter's Designated National Authority. For GB, the Designated National Authority is The Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The UK is committed to working internationally including through the OECD, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and United Nations Environment Assembly on initiatives to support the safe management of pesticides.

■ Pesticides

Geraint Davies:

[\[131110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides will include a commitment to introduce pesticide use reduction targets.

Mark Spencer:

We are assessing the potential role of targets to support our policy ambitions, and further details will be outlined in our National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of

Pesticides, to be published in the first half of this year. Any targets that we set must be meaningful and designed to deliver our desired outcomes – to minimise the risks of pesticides to the environment and encourage sustainable pest management.

■ **Pets (Microchips) Bill**

James Daly: [\[130021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of the Pets (Microchips) Bill.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's favoured approach is to work collaboratively with all parties to effect positive change without the need for legislation.

■ **Pets: Travel**

Ben Lake: [\[132498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the financial impact on pet owners and assistance dog users transporting their pets to the EU of the cost of Animal Health Certificates; what progress has been made on reaching an agreement with the European Commission on granting Great Britain Part 1 listed status for the purposes of travelling with pets; and whether she has discussed this matter with the Welsh Government.

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 recognise the undue financial and administrative impact that these EU requirements are having on pet owners and assistance dog users. 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 and continue to engage on these matters.

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

Defra continues to work with the Devolved Administrations including the Welsh Government on pet travel matters including pet travel documentation.

■ **Thames Water**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[130073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the number of sewage leaks reported by Thames Water in (a) Streatham constituency, (b) London and (c) England in the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency regulates discharges from Storm Overflows that discharge to the environment during rainfall, these are not leaks. The Environment Agency collates discharge data from Water and Sewerage Companies for storm overflows and for 2020 and 2021 the data is published [here](#). The 2022 data will be published in March 2023.

The installation of Event Duration Monitors on Storm Overflows has increased markedly from 2016 to 2021. We hold data for Thames Water for the period 2018 to 2021 when a total of 44,368 spills were recorded.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Females****Siobhain McDonagh:**[\[131108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to support Afghan civil society in delivering (a) humanitarian and (b) development assistance to vulnerable women and girls in that country.

Leo Docherty:

Since April 2021, the Government has disbursed £514 million in aid for Afghanistan. We contribute to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund which includes a \$20 million programme of support to Afghan civil society. The Government has committed to at least 50 per cent of our aid in Afghanistan reaching women and girls. We fund programmes that target women and girls, aimed at tackling gender-based violence and providing health and sexual reproductive health services. We continue to press the Taliban to reverse their ban on female aid workers as Afghan women are critical in providing life-saving support to women and girls.

Siobhain McDonagh:[\[131115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with women-led organisations in Afghanistan on those groups' involvement in addressing the Taliban government's ban on female aid workers in that country.

Leo Docherty:

The ban on Afghan women working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) represents a further violation of the rights and freedoms of Afghan women. FCDO officials and ministers regularly engage with women-led organisations in Afghanistan, including local and international NGOs and UN Women. On 19 January the Minister of State for South Asia chaired a meeting with Afghan women including representatives from women-led organisations based in Afghanistan, which discussed the impact of the ban and how best to respond. The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan chairs regular meetings with NGO partners based in Afghanistan, most recently on 25 January.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[131116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to with NGOs to support programmes in Afghanistan affected by the Taliban government's ban on female aid workers in that country.

Leo Docherty:

The ban on Afghan women working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) represents a further violation of the rights and freedoms of Afghan women. The Government is working with the UN, NGOs and other donor governments to understand the impact of the ban, pursue a coordinated response and ensure that life-saving humanitarian assistance continues where possible. Where NGO partners have had to suspend activity, either partially or fully, the UK is continuing to cover staff salaries and other critical associated operational costs. The Government continues to press the Taliban to reverse their decision.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

Sarah Champion:

[\[131188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps with the Home Secretary to accelerate the processing of Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme applications made by British Council (a) contractors and (b) contractors' family members; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

The Government received over 11,400 expressions of interest (EOI) under ACRS Pathway 3. We have informed over 200 individuals that they are eligible in principle, subject to passing security checks. Including their dependents, this accounts for over 900 of the 1500 available places on Pathway 3 in year one. We are continuing to work at pace to allocate the remaining places. We will not be commenting on individual cohort numbers while EOIs are still being processed and security checks are outstanding. We will update Parliament once we have completed the allocation process, notified all those who submitted EOIs and have assured data to share.

■ **Africa: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps**

John Howell:

[\[131217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) Cameroon, (b) Central African Republic, (c) Democratic Republic of the Congo, (d) Ghana and (e) Niger on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps activity in those countries.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK values its relationships with Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana and Niger and will continue to work in partnership to monitor security developments in these countries. The UK is committed to working with the international community to ensure Iran abides by international laws and norms and is held to account for its destabilising activity. We have sanctions

designations on over 300 Iranian individuals and entities for their role in weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, and terrorism, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety.

■ Asia-Pacific Region: Diplomatic Relations

Catherine West:

[\[122198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of his Department's operating and frontline diplomacy expenditure has been attributed to the Asia/Pacific region in each year since 2010.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Frontline diplomatic activity was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's term for ODA eligible operating costs and so this response focuses on that expenditure. Prior to the merger of the Department for International Development and Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2020, the two legacy organisations took different approaches to reporting ODA eligible operating expenditure. As the aid agency, 100 per cent of DFID's operating expenditure was ODA eligible, but DFID did not break operating expenditure down by region. Only a portion of the FCO's operating expenditure was ODA eligible and, based on the published Statistics on International Development, the table below shows how much for each calendar year. Please note that it is not possible to provide the percentage of total ODA eligible operating costs to Asia and Pacific in 2010 as the figure available for total ODA eligible operating costs is likely to be an underestimate.

Ex-FCO ODA eligible operating costs attributed to Asia & Pacific regions* 2010-2020

	£ THOUSANDS	% OF TOTAL FCO ODA ELIGIBLE OPERATING COSTS
2010	11,247	-
2011	14,900	21.5%
2012	35,300	45.9%
2013	32,076	39.4%
2014	45,540	36.4%
2015	57,473	37.9%
2016	86,190	43.2%
2017**	115,025	23.8%
2018	125,219	22.0%
2019	129,268	20.7%

	£ THOUSANDS	% OF TOTAL FCO ODA ELIGIBLE OPERATING COSTS
2020	118,103	18.7%

*For the list of countries included in Asia and Pacific regions please see OECD Development Assistance Committee recipient code list
<https://webfs.oecd.org/oda/DataCollection/Resources/DAC-CRS-CODES.xls>

**In 2017 FCO updated its approach to estimating the ODA eligible proportion of its operating costs. See here for more information:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760178/Methodology-FCO-Frontline-Diplomatic-Activity.pdf

In calendar year 2021 the FCDO aligned methodologies, and spent £129,090k on ODA eligible operating costs in Asia and Pacific, which represents 20.2 per cent of total FCDO ODA eligible operating costs.

■ Canada: Social Security Benefits

Richard Thomson: [\[127918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has held with his Canadian counterpart on a reciprocal social security agreement.

David Rutley:

The Foreign Secretary has not held recent discussions on a reciprocal social security agreement with his Canadian counterpart.

■ Commonwealth: British Nationals Abroad

Richard Thomson: [\[127917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support UK pensioners in Commonwealth countries.

David Rutley:

We support around 30,000 British nationals and their families each year. Our services are set out in our published guide on gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/support-for-british-nationals-abroad#about-our-consular-services>. The location of our offices is also available on gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies>. Our consular staff are contactable 24/7, 365 days a year and strive to provide the right tailored assistance to those who request our help, doing more for those who need more help.

■ Developing Countries: Malaria and Tuberculosis

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[131172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 23 January 2022 to Question 126580 on Developing Countries: Malaria and Tuberculosis, what proportion of the UK funding commitment to the Gavi Matching Fund for 2021-25 has been delivered.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK has committed up to £25 million to Gavi's current Matching fund 2021-2025. Of this £25 million we have so far contributed £5 million (20%) towards the fund. To date £1 million of the UK/Gavi Matching Fund has been matched. There are currently further UK/Gavi Matching Fund opportunities being explored for this year.

■ Egypt: Police

Sarah Champion:

[\[127771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether training has been provided by the College of Policing to Egypt's police force in the last five years.

Sarah Champion:

[\[127927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has provided funding to the College of Policing for the delivery of (a) support and (b) training to Egypt's police force in each financial year since 1 January 2017.

David Rutley:

FCDO have provided funding to the College of Policing to deliver three training courses to the Egyptian police since 1 January 2017:

- 1) CT Security Coordinators Course (2017). Trainers from the UK College of Policing (CoP) delivered a Security Coordinators course to Egyptian police officers in the UK. The course provided training on mitigating and responding to terrorism incidents.
- 2) Police Command and Communications Training (2018). As part of a programme of CT protective security cooperation, this course provided training on emergency response command and control to Egyptian police in the UK.
- 3) CT Security Coordinators Course (2019). Trainers from the UK College of Policing (CoP) delivered a Security Coordinators course to Egyptian police officers in the UK. The course provided training on mitigating and responding to terrorism incidents.

■ Ethiopia: Development Aid

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[128614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the press release by his Department entitled UK announces support to Ethiopian drought and conflict-affected regions, published on 20 January 2023, what

steps his Department is taking to (a) support and (b) monitor the accessibility of assistance funded through the Productive Safety Net Programme (i) in each geographical area of and (ii) for people from all ethnic backgrounds in Ethiopia.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The package of lifesaving aid I announced on 20 January will reach hundreds of thousands of people, over half of which are women and children.

We closely monitor all support provided to the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in all operating regions through rigorous compliance checks and regular field missions. We have also worked with the Government of Ethiopia and other donors to establish new grievance redress mechanisms for PSNP in communities. This provides people with the right to appeal if they are not deemed eligible to receive assistance through the programme.

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

Emily Thornberry:

[\[119029\]](#)

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 what purpose purchases were made from One4All of (a) £9,000 on 13 January 2021, (b) £2,200 on 9 March 2021, (c) £850 on 6 December 2021, (d) £600 on 19 January 2022, (e) £1,890 on 8-11 March 2022, (f) £2,525 on 19 April 2022 and (g) £1,424.89 on 18 May 2022.

David Rutley:

This relates to bonus award vouchers for FCDO and DIT staff across our network purchased as part of Reward and Recognition awards for staff. These recognised exceptional achievement by teams and individuals across departments. Bonuses paid out as non-cash vouchers is a standard practice across Government and the private sector.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[123885\]](#)

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, for how many (a) individuals and (b) nights accommodation was purchased at the Gulf Hotel, Bahrain on 1 and 3 November 2021; and what the purpose was of the stay at that hotel.

David Rutley:

These relate to the deposit and final payment for catering services by the Gulf Hotel at the Remembrance Day lunch held for over 100 guests at the Ambassador's residence in November 2021, including serving members and veterans of the UK Armed Forces and senior representatives of the Bahraini Government.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[123887\]](#)

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 October 2021, what the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list was for the event for which The Knot 36 were paid £2,942.16 on 27 October 2021.

David Rutley:

The expense was for the catering of the Queen's Birthday Party (QBP) at the British Embassy in The Hague. The event hosted senior representatives of the Dutch government and business community. Expenditure was subject to the usual controls.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[\[R\] \[128660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure his Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code; and whether that monitoring data gathered is shared with union representatives.

David Rutley:

The FCDO fully complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code, ensuring that information collected informs policy, process and operation.

The FCDO shares information with the Trade Unions in compliance with our statutory obligations and in line with the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Informing and Consulting. Any information shared is done in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Holiday Leave**

Chris Stephens:

[\[R\] \[132469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

David Rutley:

The FCDO is currently working to create a new Annual Leave Policy for the Department. Negotiations are ongoing with the Departmental Trade Union Side, which includes allowing all FCDO staff the option to trade annual leave. This offer was previously only available for ex FCO staff.

Information on annual leave is available to staff through the FCDO Intranet.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Trade Unions**

Chris Stephens:

[\[R\] \[127798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what human resources information their Department shares with trade unions on a regular basis.

David Rutley:

The FCDO Human Resources Directorate (HRD) leads employee relations with the three trade unions that the FCDO and FCDO Services recognises the Public and Commercial Services Union, FDA and Prospect.

HRD shares information with the Trade Unions in compliance with our statutory obligations and in line with the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Informing and Consulting. Any information shared will be done in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

■ **Hebron: Israel****Jessica Morden:**[\[127716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterparts on recent deaths of activists and civilians in Hebron.

David Rutley:

We have called upon the Government of Israel to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations and to allow them to freely operate in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories. We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities. We encourage them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. We will continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire. 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.

■ **Indo-Pacific Region: EU External Relations****Catherine West:**[\[131269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the European Union and (b) European Union member states on regional stability and European presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Leo Docherty:

The Foreign Secretary speaks regularly to EU Foreign Ministers on the importance of the Indo-Pacific. This is in recognition of our shared ambitions to deepen engagement with regional partners, to promote shared prosperity and regional stability. The UK continues to strengthen engagement and collaboration with the EU and EU member states on Indo-Pacific issues, including through the G7, having worked closely with Germany through their 2022 Presidency and now working closely with Japan through its 2023 G7 Presidency.

The Foreign Secretary speaks regularly with the German Foreign Minister, including in January at our inaugural UK-Germany Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue. The Foreign Secretary also spoke to the French Foreign Minister in November 2022 where we committed to strengthening co-operation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. We look forward to the upcoming UK-France Summit on 10 March, where there will be discussions on UK-France collaboration in the region.

■ Iran: Political Prisoners

Dan Carden:

[\[125463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 117891, whether his Department is taking steps to offer support to Iranian political prisoners who are not British nationals; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of sponsorship arrangements similar to those made by parliamentarians in other European countries.

David Rutley:

The UK supports protestors by ensuring that the Iranian regime is held to account for its brutal response to demonstrations following the tragic death of Mahsa Amini. UK action, alongside our partners, is shining a light on the regime's persistent human rights violations and ensuring it pays a political price on the international stage for its actions. In addition to over 40 sanctions designations under our Iran human rights regime since October, on 23 January we announced sanctions on the deputy Prosecutor General and six other individuals and entities. Through our sanctions designations, our work in multilateral fora and our lobbying, the UK is keeping the focus of international pressure on those responsible for human rights violations. We continue to offer consular support to all British nationals in Iran where they need our assistance.

■ Israel: Defence Equipment and Arms Trade

Claire Hanna:

[\[128724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban the (a) sale of arms to and (b) import of military technology from Israel.

David Rutley:

The UK takes its defence export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely and keep relevant licences under review. We will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The UK also does not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo would lead to progress in the peace process.

■ Mexico: Missing Persons

Dan Carden: [\[131316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Mexican Government on the disappearance of people in that country.

Dan Carden: [\[131317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Mexican Government on the case of Claudia Uruchurtu following sentencing.

David Rutley:

Our sympathies are with family of Claudia Uruchurtu who disappeared in Mexico on 26th March 2021. Our Ambassador and Embassy to Mexico City have been in regular contact with her family and have raised her disappearance and the related legal process with senior representatives of the Federal Government as well as with the outgoing and incoming governments of the State of Oaxaca. In December, after sentencing, I [Minister Rutley] spoke with Minister Moreno Toscano, the Under-Secretary of External Relations. We discussed the human rights situation in Mexico, including the worryingly high levels of disappearances and Claudia Uruchurtu's particular case. We continue to lobby at high levels and have pressed on the importance of due legal process being followed in future proceedings.

■ Moldova: Russia

Sir Robert Buckland: [\[129815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the Moldovan Government in countering Russian (a) political influence and (b) disinformation.

Leo Docherty:

The UK resolutely supports the Moldovan government and people in the face of Russian aggression and disinformation. On 21 November, I [Minister Docherty] represented the UK at the 3rd Moldova Support Platform in Paris and met Moldovan Foreign Minister Popescu. I reiterated the UK's support for Moldova as did the Foreign Secretary when he met Foreign Minister Popescu on 26 October. Through our alliances and direct support we are helping build a stronger, more resilient Moldova, including through our work on anti-corruption, counter-disinformation and reform for which in 2022 we announced £12 million of additional funding over the next 3 years.

■ Pakistan: Floods

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[128690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the £36 million committed to the humanitarian response to flooding in Pakistan has been disbursed as of 20 January 2023.

Leo Docherty:

Over £25 million (69%) of the UK's £36 million pledge has been disbursed to date. Our funding is supporting aid agencies to respond to people's immediate needs by providing water, sanitation and shelter, protecting women and girls, and tackling the rise in waterborne diseases.

■ Palestinians: West Bank

Claire Hanna:

[\[128723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on (a) the ruling of the Israeli high court on evictions in Masafer Yatta and (b) the displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank.

David Rutley:

The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We repeatedly 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 Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January in Masafer Yatta and raised Masafer Yatta with the Israeli ambassador to the UK on 26 January.

■ Russia: Sanctions

Mark Pritchard:

[\[129757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will bring forward sanctions on individuals within the Russian orthodox church who are shown to be complicit in alleged Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government does not speculate on specific future sanctions, as to do so could reduce their impact. The UK will continue to hold those who support Putin's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine to account. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK has sanctioned over 1,200 individuals, including Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

■ Russia: Unmanned Air Vehicles

Mr Simon Clarke:

[\[131276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' involvement in the (a) production and (b) provision of armed drones used by Russia in Ukraine.

David Rutley:

Iran is now one of Russia's top military backers. The Iranian regime has sent hundreds of drones to Moscow, in violation of UNSCR 2231, which have been used to attack Ukraine's critical infrastructure and kill civilians. The UK has raised this issue alongside partners at the UN Security Council on 19 October and 19 December 2022. The UK adopted new sanctions against Iranian individuals and entities involved in these transfers in October and December. The FCDO will continue to work with partners to hold Iran to account for all of its malign activity.

■ South Asia: Terrorism

Sir Robert Buckland:

[\[129813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of impact of the resurgence of militant groups, including the Haqqani Network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan on the security of (a) Afghanistan and (b) the surrounding region.

Leo Docherty:

The UK expects the Taliban to uphold its commitments made in the Doha agreement, including on preventing the use of Afghan territory by terrorist groups. We are monitoring closely the activity of groups such as the Haqqani network and their impact on the security of Afghanistan, the region and the UK.

We raise security on a regular basis with international counterparts and regional partners. On the 9th January Minister Mitchell raised regional security during a bilateral meeting with the Pakistani Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at the International Conference on Climate Resilience in Pakistan.

■ Ukraine: Hospitals

Jim Shannon:

[\[129789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help provide (a) medications and (b) medical equipment to hospitals in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

As part of the UK's £220 million programme of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and the region, we have delivered over 11 million medical items. This includes 6.8 million doses of medicine - including antibiotics, pain relief and specialist medicines - as well as wound care supplies, personal protective equipment, ventilators, sterile needles, cannulas, bandages, specialist brain and spinal injury equipment, and over

70 ambulances. The UK has provided £300,000 to UK-Med to help train Ukrainian health workers deal with mass casualties and set up mobile health clinics for the most vulnerable civilians.

■ Venezuela: Politics and Government

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[129747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the approach adopted by Nicolas Maduro to the Venezuelan Catholic Church.

David Rutley:

Views held by Nicolas Maduro about the Roman Catholic Church in Venezuela have no particular implications for UK policies. We have on frequent occasions made clear our concern for the Venezuelan people and that we consider Mr Maduro and his regime in large part responsible for the economic and humanitarian crises afflicting the country. The United Kingdom is a determined champion of freedom of speech and is firmly committed to the principle that freedom of speech is essential for the good government of any country. Representatives of the Catholic Church have a distinguished record in many countries of speaking truth to those in power and of speaking up for people whose concerns are not being taken with the seriousness they deserve.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion and Contraceptives

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[130046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Sexual and Reproductive Health Action Plan will seek to improve women's access to (a) contraception and (b) abortion; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: We are committed to improving reproductive health in England, including improving women's access to contraceptive and abortion services and published the Women's Health Strategy for England in August 2022. This sets out our ambition that women and girls can access services that meet their needs across their life course, that there is a system-wide approach to women's reproductive health which supports individual choice, and women and girls have more of their health needs met at one time and in one place. The Women's Health Strategy commits to encouraging the expansion of Women's Health Hubs and other models of care which bring together essential women's services, including contraceptive services. It also emphasises the importance of women's access to safe, legal and regulated abortion services. We are considering the need for a further Government plan on reproductive health.

■ Ambulance Services: Standards

Sir Greg Knight:

[132305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce ambulance response times for emergencies in East Yorkshire.

Will Quince:

A range of measures are in place to reduce ambulance response times, including in East Yorkshire. The National Health Service winter resilience plan will increase NHS bed capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, helping reduce pressure in accident and emergency so that ambulances can get swiftly back out on the road.

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 will improve flow through hospitals and reducing waits to handover ambulance patients. This is on top of the £500 million already invested last year.

NHS England has allocated £150 million of additional system funding for ambulance service pressures in 2022/23, alongside £20 million of capital funding to upgrade the ambulance fleet in each year to 2024/25.

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 rapid action to improve urgent and emergency, elective, and primary care performance towards pre-pandemic levels. The NHS will soon set out detailed recovery plans to deliver faster ambulance response times.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Dr Neil Hudson:

[130028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage uptake of the NHS Breast Screening Programme in (a) Penrith and The Border constituency and (b) Cumbria.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department and NHS England are committed to the recovery and improvement of screening uptake for breast screening nationally. As part of the Women's Health Strategy, published in July 2022, £10 million funding was awarded to the NHS breast screening programme. This funding will provide 29 new mobile and static breast screening units as well as upgrades to existing units. Funding is now in place for National Health Service trusts to spend within the 2022/23 financial year

NHS Breast Screening Providers are also being encouraged to work with cancer alliances, primary care networks, NHS England regional teams and the voluntary sector, to bring together work to promote uptake of breast screening and take action to ensure as many people as possible can access services.

■ Cancer: Diagnosis

Jim Shannon:

[\[131192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the NHS Long Term Plan milestone of diagnosing 75% of cancers at an early stage by 2028.

Helen Whately:

Improving early diagnosis of cancer is a priority for the National Health Service.

The NHS is implementing non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways for patients who do not fit clearly into a single 'urgent cancer' referral pathway, as defined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guidance NG12, but who are at risk of being diagnosed with cancer. 99 NSS pathways are currently operational across England, with more in development.

To encourage people to get in touch with their general practitioner if they notice or are worried about symptoms that could be cancer, NHS England is running the 'Help Us, Help You' campaigns, which seeks to address the barriers that are deterring patients from accessing the NHS.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Feryal Clark:

[\[126864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on delivering the NHS Long Term Plan ambitions on Cancer.

Helen Whately:

Improving early diagnosis of cancer is a priority for the National Health Service. That is why one of the core ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan is to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage one or two by 2028.

The NHS is implementing non-specific symptom (NSS) pathways for patients who do not fit clearly into a single 'urgent cancer' referral pathway, as defined by NICE Guidance (NG12), but who are at risk of being diagnosed with cancer. 99 NSS pathways are currently operational across England, with more in development.

Tracey Crouch:

[\[131218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to use submissions to the 10 year cancer plan call for evidence to inform the Major Conditions Strategy.

Tracey Crouch:

[\[131219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his Department's policy to publish a 10 year cancer plan.

Helen Whately:

The Government announced on 24 January that it will publish a Major Conditions Strategy. Cancer will be a significant element of the new Strategy and we will ensure

that all the learning from the over 5,000 submissions to the call for evidence will be considered. This will replace the suggested 10-year cancer plan.

Alberto Costa: [\[131263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with Cancer Research UK on the 10-Year Cancer Plan.

Helen Whately:

Ministers and officials within the Department have regularly met with representatives of Cancer Research UK and other charities, with the previously announced 10-Year Cancer Plan being discussed on a number of occasions.

■ Cervical Cancer: Health Services

Catherine West: [\[126747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve diagnosis times for cervical cancer, (b) reduce backlogs for specialist referral for patients with suspected cervical cancer and (v) reduce waiting times for patients who require surgery to treat cervical cancer.

Helen Whately:

Improving the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, including cervical cancer, is a priority. One of the core ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan is to diagnose 75% of cancers at stage one or two by 2028 and to ensure that by 2028, an additional 55,000 people will survive their cancer for five years or more.

A Best Practice Timed Pathway for gynaecological cancers, including cervical, has been produced by NHS England and will be delivered through Cancer Alliances. The pathway will support the delivery of a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days, in line with the recently introduced Faster Diagnosis Standard.

This work is supported by the £2.3 billion investment announced at the 2021 Spending Review, that will transform diagnostic services over the next three years. Most of this investment will help increase the number of Community Diagnostic Centres up to 160 by March 2025, expanding and protecting elective planned diagnostic services.

■ Cervical Cancer: Merseyside

Conor McGinn: [\[131231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in (a) St Helens and (b) Merseyside have been diagnosed with cervical cancer in the last 12 months.

Conor McGinn: [\[132478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in St Helens have been diagnosed with cervical cancer in the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

The National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS), part of NHS Digital, collects data on all cancers diagnosed in England.

There were 9 diagnoses of cervical cancer in St Helens in 2020, the most recent complete diagnosis year available for analysis, and 71 diagnoses in the Merseyside region.

■ Cheadle Royal Hospital**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:**[\[131346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of patient safety at the Priory Hospital Cheadle Royal.

Maria Caulfield:

In response to concerns raised following the tragic deaths of three young women at the Priory Hospital Cheadle Royal, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted an inspection of the core service acute wards for working age adults and the psychiatric intensive care unit in April 2022. CQC was assured that the provider had taken immediate action to mitigate future risks and concluded no further regulatory action was required. The hospital is currently rated by CQC as good overall.

CQC conducted a further inspection in January 2023 in response to concerns received. A full inspection report will be published in due course once the pre-publication process is completed. If necessary, CQC will not hesitate to take enforcement action to protect people using the service.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**Alexander Stafford:**[\[130052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using SNOMED-CT diagnostic codes to determine the number of (a) adults and (b) children living with myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made.

Alexander Stafford:[\[130053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had recent discussions with the ME Association on the ME/CFS Delivery Plan.

Helen Whately:

The Department has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders as part of the development of the cross Government Delivery Plan on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, including the ME Association.

■ Community Hospitals

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[118803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many inpatient beds there were in NHS community hospitals in England in (a) 1997, (b) 2010 and (c) 2022; and if he will make an assessment of trends in inpatient capacity in those hospitals between those dates.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 January 2023]: NHS England holds data on the number of community rehab beds in England collected monthly through the NHS Capacity Tracker, but this data is not available in 1997 and 2010. Monthly data collection on community rehab beds started in 2020, from which point capacity has increased. The Capacity Tracker shows there were 7,062 community rehab beds in August 2020, rising to 7,629 in January 2022 and 7,999 in January 2023.

A community hospital is a service which offers integrated health and social care services in the community. Therefore 'community hospital' functions are carried out in a range of places including intermediate care and rehab settings and District General hospitals, not just in buildings called community hospitals. NHS England therefore define beds on function rather than on place or building.

■ Contraceptives: Females

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[130045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the extent of disparities in access to contraception experienced by women from (a) ethnic minority backgrounds, (b) deprived socioeconomic backgrounds and (c) the LGBTQ+ community.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: No specific assessment has been made. However, as part of the Women's Health Strategy, we have committed to commissioning a national survey of women's reproductive health every two years which will gather information on disparities in relation to contraception.

■ Dental Services

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[131420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of NHS dental practices accepting new (a) child and (b) adult patients.

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[131421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of dentists with NHS activity in the Humber and North Yorkshire integrated care board.

Neil O'Brien:

In September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care, including in the Humber and North Yorkshire. These will increase access to National Health Service dentistry by adults and children, whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices.

We have taken action to implement these changes, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022.

NHS England is holding further discussions with the British Dental Association and other stakeholders for additional reforms of the NHS Dental System planned to take place in 2023.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[132529]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment has he made of the adequacy of (a) access to and (b) availability of NHS dental care.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department routinely monitors Dental Statistics, published by NHS Digital, which brings together information on National Health Service dental activity in England, including at NHS Commissioning Regions and Local Authority levels. Dental Statistics is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-dental-statistics/2021-22-annual-report>

In September 2022, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care. These will improve access to NHS dental services whilst making the NHS dental contract more attractive to dental practices.

We have taken action to implement these changes, including through regulations that came into effect on 25 November 2022.

NHS England is holding further discussions with the British Dental Association and other stakeholders for additional reforms of the NHS Dental System planned to take place in 2023.

■ Dental Services: Bristol**Darren Jones:****[130090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentistry practices are providing NHS services in the city of Bristol.

Darren Jones:**[130091]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dentistry practices provided NHS services and treatments in the city of Bristol in each year since 2017.

Neil O'Brien:

The following table shows the number of dental practices providing services National Health Service and treatments and services in the City of Bristol from 2017 to 2022 is summarised.

YEAR	NUMBER OF DENTISTRY PRACTICES PROVIDING NHS SERVICES AND TREATMENTS
2017	16
2018	16
2019	15
2020	14
2021	14
2022	14

■ **Dentistry: Migrant Workers****Holly Mumby-Croft:**[\[131423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to support the General Dental Council reduce the backlog in applicants waiting to sit the Overseas Registration Examination.

Neil O'Brien:

The capacity of the Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) is constrained by rules within the General Dental Council's (GDC) legislative framework which includes prescriptive detail on the ORE content and structure. The department has worked with the GDC to develop and consult on legislative proposals to allow the regulator greater flexibility to amend its existing international registration processes and explore alternative registration pathways as it considers appropriate. It will be for the GDC, as an independent regulator, to decide how best to use the flexibility that these proposals allow but we understand that the GDC will consult on changes to how it operates the ORE. This would enable it to increase the number of dentists it can assess, potentially allowing overseas dentists to join its register more quickly.

The draft Order was debated in the House of Commons on 6 December 2022 and the House of Lords on 9 January 2023. Subject to the completion of the Parliamentary approvals process, we aim to introduce the legislative changes in February 2023.

■ Diseases: Health Services

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[131148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's Major Conditions and Diseases Strategy, whether public health charities and organisations were consulted on the contents of that strategy prior to its publication.

Helen Whately:

On 24 January 2023 the Government announced its intention to publish a Major Conditions Strategy. An interim report will be published in the summer. The Strategy will take forward the insights from previous engagement and consultation exercises on mental health, cancer, dementia and health disparities, and bring these into a single, powerful strategy. In addition to this prior engagement, there will be further opportunities for stakeholders, including charities and public health organisations, citizens, and industry to contribute to the development and content of the Strategy in due course.

■ Drugs: Prices

Chris Green:

[\[129958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the NHS continuing to adopt uniform pricing by medicine on patient access to innovative medicines.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made. NHS England set out their commercial approach to new medicines in the Commercial Framework published in February 2021. The framework sets out, in line with commitments made under the Voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access (VPAS), that the National Health Service can reach complex confidential commercial arrangements with companies that bring new medicines to the market which offer greater levels of health gain relative to cost. The commercial framework allows the flexibility to create different commercial approaches where the importance of the medicine warrants it.

Chris Green:

[\[129959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many commercial agreements NHS England has agreed with manufacturers of medicines that allow, support or result in non-uniform pricing by medicine.

Will Quince:

Since 2020 NHS England has agreed 24 commercial agreements that have resulted in non-uniform pricing by medicine, via either the Cancer Drugs Fund or through bespoke commercial deals to support routine commissioning.

■ Eating Disorders

Tom Hunt: [\[131428\]](#)

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

Maria Caulfield:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we will invest almost £1 billion extra in community mental health care for adults with severe mental illness by 2023/24. This will give 370,000 adults with severe mental illnesses, including eating disorders, greater choice and control over their care and support them to live well in their communities. As part of this we are expanding community eating disorder services capacity, including crisis care and intensive home treatment.

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.

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.

■ Elective Recovery Taskforce

Dan Carden: [\[129992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to (a) identify and (b) manage potential conflicts of interest during the appointment process to the Elective Recovery Taskforce.

Will Quince:

The Elective Recovery Taskforce is a steering group comprised of appointees from across the healthcare sector, including the National Health Service and independent sector providers. Robust discussions at the taskforce enable a cross-section of interests to be heard and challenged, allowing the Department to gain a well-rounded view on different issues.

The Department undertook a due diligence process in advance of the first meeting and is clear that the parameters of the taskforce are sharing best practice, making recommendations to tackle the elective recovery backlog and ensuring a focus on value for money for the NHS. The taskforce does not have decision making powers and is not a commissioning function.

■ Epilepsy: Medical Treatments

Tulip Siddiq: [\[129856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the treatment of epilepsy.

Helen Whately:

The majority of health services for people with epilepsy are commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs). ICBs are best placed to make decisions regarding the provision of health services to their local population, including for the treatment of epilepsy, subject to local prioritisation and funding.

At the national level, there are a number of initiatives supporting service improvement for those with epilepsy, including NHS England's Neuroscience Service Transformation Programme and RightCare Epilepsy Toolkit.

Family Hubs: Mental Health Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[129928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that mental health professionals are integrated into the Government's work on family hubs.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department of Health and Social Care is working with the Department for Education to improve outcomes for babies, children, parents and carers. Around £300 million has been allocated to fund a new three-year Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, £100 million of which has been allocated to perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships. Professionals are central to the success of the programme, and we are therefore investing in training programmes for evidence-based parent-infant relationship interventions to improve staff capability. There is also an expectation that all staff in family hubs should have an understanding of mental health issues and be able to refer families to specialist mental health services.

Food Irradiation (England) Regulations 2009**Stella Creasy:**[\[131185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Retained EU Law Bill, whether he plans to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Food Irradiation (England) Regulations 2009.

Neil O'Brien:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December 2022 to Question 102910.

General Practitioners**Tom Randall:**[\[131443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Appointments in General Practice report published in December 2022, how many of the GP appointments recorded were first contact triage appointments.

Neil O'Brien:

In NHS Digital's December 2022 Appointments in General Practice data publication, the number of general practice appointments recorded with the category "clinical triage" was 3.50 million, in November 2022. New data was published on the 26 January 2023 showing that 3.23 million appointments were recorded with the category "clinical triage" in December 2022. This will include first contact triage appointments, but data is not available for exclusively first contact triage appointments.

Tom Randall:[\[131444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in the context of appointments published by NHS Digital as part of its Appointments in General Practice data, how many recorded GP appointments are in-person appointments following up on triage appointments.

Neil O'Brien:

This data is not held in the format requested.

Tom Randall:[\[131445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the progress made in carrying out the October 2021 Plan for Improving Access to GP appointments.

Neil O'Brien:

The plan announced by the Government and NHS England in October 2021 set out a package of measures to support general practice (GP) over the winter period and in the longer term. This included making £250 million available for a Winter Access Fund to increase capacity, a short term telephony solution for GP practices, expanding the Community Pharmacist Consultation Service and NHS England's Access Improvement Programme and a £5 million fund to facilitate essential upgrades to practice security measures.

Examples of how the Winter Access Fund was used include the creation of additional hubs and helplines, expanding home visiting capacity, funding additional sessions from staff.

NHS England's short term telephony solution is already helping practices to free up lines for incoming calls and from this month, January 2023, NHS England is accelerating work to support all GP practices to procure cloud-based telephony systems.

In the 12 months up to December 2022, there were on average 1.32 million GP appointments per working day, excluding COVID-19 vaccinations. Compared to the 12 months up to December 2021, which was 1.23 million, this is an increase of 7%.

We recognise that some people are still struggling to access general practice services in a timely way. We will soon be publishing our Recovery Plan for primary care.

■ General Practitioners: Labour Turnover

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[132452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to improve the recruitment and retention of GPs in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Neil O'Brien:

We are working with NHS England and Health Education England to increase the general practice (GP) workforce in England, including Coventry and the West Midlands. This includes measures to boost recruitment, address the reasons why doctors leave the profession, and encourage them to return to practice.

The updated GP Contract Framework announced a number of new schemes, alongside continued support for existing recruitment and retention schemes for the general practice workforce.

To boost recruitment, we have increased the number of GP training places. Last year, we saw the highest ever number of doctors accepting a place on GP training, a record 4,032 trainees, up from 2,671 in 2014.

■ Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: Discharges

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[129723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he last held discussions with representatives of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust on the level of delayed discharges in that Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: The Secretary of State has not held discussions with representatives of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust on the level of delayed discharges in that trust. Minister Caulfield met with the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board on 20 December 2022 and discussed a range of subjects including delayed discharge.

■ Health Visitors

Rachael Maskell:

[\[131245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to help retain Health Visitors in the NHS workforce; and what estimate he has made of the number of Health Visitors who are (a) eligible and (b) willing to return to practice.

Neil O'Brien:

It is the responsibility of local authority commissioners, working with their service provider, to determine health visitor numbers based upon local needs.

No recent estimate has been made. For NHS provision, the NHS Retention Programme seeks to understand why staff leave, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay whilst keeping them well. All NHS Trusts have individually

tailored retention programmes, including focusing on career development and training pathways to retain staff.

■ Health: Children

Rachael Maskell:

[\[131241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help ensure (a) babies and (b) children are (i) well nourished and (ii) warm in all homes; and if he will introduce a screening process to help ensure children in hospitals are not discharged to settings where those conditions cannot be met.

Neil O'Brien:

Through the Healthy Food Schemes, the Government provides a nutritional safety net to those families who need it the most. Healthy Start, the Nursery Milk Scheme and the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme together help more than three million children.

The Government is investing £12 billion in Help to Heat schemes to help make people's homes warmer and less costly to heat. This includes £1.1 billion to the Home Upgrade Grant until 2025, of which £500 million has already been granted to local authorities as part of the Sustainable Warmth Competition to provide energy-efficiency upgrades to lower-income, energy inefficient homes.

Children are discharged to their parent or carer when they are medically fit to leave the hospital. If a health practitioner has cause to suspect that the child was at risk of neglect, they would follow the child safeguarding processes. We do not intend to introduce a new screening process at present.

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[132614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) publish and (b) implement a PrEP Action Plan.

Neil O'Brien:

As part of the HIV Action Plan, we committed to supporting the system to continue to improve access to HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for key population groups. We established a sub group of the HIV Action Plan implementation Steering Group who have considered how to improve access to HIV PrEP for all population groups and in settings outside of specialist sexual health services. The findings from the sub group alongside research evidence on why some population groups who would benefit from PrEP are under-represented are informing the development of a plan for improving access to PrEP.

■ Hospital Beds: Private Sector

Margaret Greenwood: [\[131303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of beds in hospital trusts in (a) Wirral West constituency and (b) England were allocated to private patients in 2022.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[131305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients who paid for private healthcare services in NHS hospitals in (a) Wirral West constituency and (b) England in 2022.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[131306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of using NHS hospital facilities to treat private patients on waiting times for elective surgery in (a) Wirral West constituency and (b) England.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. No specific assessment has been made of the impact that delivering care for private patients has on National Health Service hospitals or elective waiting times.

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Margaret Greenwood: [\[131300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients who waited more than 12 hours to be admitted to hospital from A&E in 2022 in Wirral West constituency in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

No specific estimate has been made. Constituency level data on the number of patients waiting more than 12 hours to be admitted to hospital from accident and emergency is not collected centrally.

■ Human Papillomavirus: Screening

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[130033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department has made a recent estimate of the cost of checking for human papillomavirus using (a) smear testing and (b) the human papillomavirus test.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[130034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made a recent estimate of the costs of the various clinical methods to test for human papillomavirus.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[130035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the average cost of a smear test for human papillomavirus.

Alex Davies-Jones:

[130036]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the financial cost is to the National Health Service of a single abnormal cell change test when testing for human papillomavirus in England.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: This information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Hypothermia: Babies**

Rachael Maskell:

[131240]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help tackle cases of hypothermia in babies.

Neil O'Brien:

Midwives, health visitors and other health professionals are able to advise parents on keeping babies at safe temperatures. The Department continues to work with the Lullaby Trust to produce online resources for parents and practitioners. The National Health Service has also published information on hypothermia, including for babies at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hypothermia/>

■ **Infant Foods: Cost of Living**

Rachael Maskell:

[131242]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to (a) help ensure that mothers have adequate supplies of formula milk where they are unable to breastfeed and (b) prevent baby milk products from being watered down in the context of the cost of living crisis.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is not aware of any availability issues with infant formula.

We continue to monitor food prices using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) inflation figures. Recent pressures have been sustained and we have seen food price inflation continue to rise to 16.9% in December 2022, up from 16.5% in November 2022.

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

The government understands that people are worried about the cost of living. That's why decisive action has been taken to support households across the UK, whilst remaining fiscally responsible.

This action taken by the government means that over 8 million of the most vulnerable households across the UK will continue to be supported through next winter via additional £900 Cost of Living Payments to households on means-tested benefits, with additional support for pensioner households and individuals on disability benefits. This is in addition to the Cost of Living payments already made to these households this year.

The government is continuing to provide support to all households through the Energy Price Guarantee, which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24. This is in addition to the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme and £150 Council Tax rebate. Moreover, the government is extending the Household Support Fund in England for a further year, with £1bn additional funding (including funding for the Devolved Administrations via the Barnett Formula). The Fund will continue to support the most vulnerable households with the cost of food, energy and other essentials.

The Healthy Start scheme helps to encourage a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies and children aged under four from low-income households. Pregnant women and children aged under four and over one each receive £4.25 every week, and children aged under one each receive £8.50 every week. Healthy Start can be used to buy, or be put towards the cost of, fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried and tinned pulses, plain cow's milk and infant formula. Healthy Start beneficiaries are also eligible for free Healthy Start Vitamins.

We are continuing to keep the situation under review and focus support on the most vulnerable whilst ensuring we act in a fiscally responsible way.

Infant formula must be prepared in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The NHS website contains step by step guidance on making up infant formula safely which includes advice to follow the manufacturers' instructions closely and double check that the water level is correct and that the appropriate amount of formula powder has been added.

The full guide can be viewed at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/bottle-feeding/making-up-baby-formula/>

■ Mechanical Thrombectomy

Rachael Maskell:

[131239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer on 22 November 2022 to Question 94807 on Mechanical Thrombectomy, when financial plans will be announced to support local capital investment for the continued expansion of thrombectomy services.

Helen Whately:

NHS England has allocated £4.6 million national capital in 2022/23 for the expansion of Mechanical Thrombectomy in England.

Additional national capital investment is expected to be made available over the next two years, 2023/24 and 2024/25, for Mechanical Thrombectomy.

■ Medical Equipment: Energy

David Warburton:

[\[127863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on targeted energy support for families running lifesaving medical equipment.

Helen Whately:

There have been no specific discussions. However, the Government's cost of living support package currently delivers £15 billion worth of support measures to assist the most vulnerable with rising energy bills, including users of home medical equipment. In addition, certain specialised National Health Services, such as home Haemodialysis, do include the provision of financial support to offset energy costs sustained from running medical equipment at home. Home Oxygen Suppliers also reimburse cost of electricity required to run oxygen concentrator devices in homes, and this cost is passed onto integrated care boards as part of contractual arrangements.

■ Medical Treatments

Chris Green:

[\[129952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to work with (a) patient groups, (b) industry stakeholders and (c) other relevant parties on finding solutions to the challenges of patient access to combination therapy treatments, including (i) a lack of framework for multi-indication pricing, (ii) rigid cost-effectiveness frameworks and (iii) legal barriers.

Chris Green:

[\[129956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to establish an independently-led task and finish group to consult on and suggest innovative solutions for overcoming pricing, cost effectiveness and legal challenges around patient access to combination therapy treatments in oncology.

Chris Green:

[\[129957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will work with the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence to establish or adapt frameworks which support combination therapies to be assessed and accessed more readily in the UK, as part of NICE's iterative approach.

Will Quince:

The Department wants patients to benefit from access to effective new treatments at a price that represents value and is fair to all parties. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has been able to recommend over 95% of the combination therapies on which it published technology appraisal guidance between 2017 and 2022. NICE is developing a modular approach to its methods and process updates and potential topics will be considered by NICE taking into account all relevant factors.

NHS England's Commercial Framework for New Medicines recognises that realising the full potential health benefits from combination drug therapies can be challenging given the requirement for commercial confidentiality and the need to maintain competition.

Alongside NICE, NHS England has been supporting the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) efforts to find solutions to enable companies to engage with one another where health-improving combination therapies face challenges coming to market.

In the United Kingdom, the Competition and Markets Authority represents the sole competent authority, and the commercial aspects of bringing combination therapies to the market must be compliant with relevant legislation.

There are currently no plans to establish a task and finish group.

Chris Green:[\[129953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether policies to improve patient access to combination therapies will be considered by his Department in upcoming negotiations for the 2024 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access.

Will Quince:

The Department is considering how a successor to the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access should operate from 2024 onwards and will work with industry to agree a mutually beneficial successor that that supports better patient outcomes, ensuring the sustainability of National Health Service spend on branded medicines and enables a strong United Kingdom life sciences industry.

■ Medical Treatments: Innovation**Jim Shannon:**[\[132363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the report on Transforming lives, improving health outcomes: tackling the true cost of variation in uptake of innovative medicines, published by the NHS Confederation and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry in January 2023; and what steps he is taking to reduce such variation across the UK.

Will Quince:

As outlined in the ambitious Life Sciences Vision, which was co-developed with industry following extensive engagement with stakeholders from charities, patient interest groups, the National Health Service and devolved administrations, the Government is committed to going further and addressing concerns about the uptake and spread of proven innovations, with a particular focus on identifying and addressing any unwarranted variation in uptake.

Existing reporting tools, such as NHS Digital's Innovation Scorecard, monitor the use of innovative medicines. To further analyse the extent of regional variation in the uptake of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved medicines, the Office for Life Sciences is working with NHS England and jointly engaging with stakeholders across the health system to understand the drivers of variation and the barriers to equitable uptake.

Jim Shannon:[\[132364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the uptake and availability of innovative medicines across the UK.

Will Quince:

The Government wants National Health Service patients to benefit from access to effective new medicines in a way that represents value and is fair to all parties. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) develops guidance for the NHS on whether all new medicines represent a clinically and cost effective use of NHS resources and aims to publish guidance on new medicines as close as possible to the point of licensing. The NHS in England is legally required to make funding available for NICE recommended treatments. As part of the appraisal process, companies are able to agree commercial arrangements in line with the NHS Commercial Framework.

NICE recommends the vast majority of medicines for use in the NHS, whether for routine commissioning or through the Cancer Drugs Fund. NICE is also now able to recommend non-cancer medicines for use through the Innovative Medicines Fund.

The Government established the Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC), the umbrella organisation overseeing the health ecosystem, to bring together leaders from across the life sciences sector and tackle the barriers to adoption of innovation in the NHS. The AAC is delivering real success. In 2021/22, the AAC supported over 570,000 patients with access to proven innovations, secured £445 million of investment, supported 3,000 innovations and created and safeguarded over 3,900 jobs.

As outlined in the ambitious Life Sciences Vision, which was co-developed with industry, the Government is committed to going further and addressing concerns about the uptake and spread of proven innovations, with a particular focus on identifying and addressing any unwarranted variation in uptake. The AAC will continue to be at the forefront of this agenda and work is underway to consider how

to best utilise regional, local and frontline delivery partners to support the adoption and spread of proven innovations.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Penrose:

[\[128616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 19 November and 19 December 2022 on behalf of his constituent Tony Stock on staffing in social care.

Helen Whately:

I replied to the hon. Member on 25 January 2023.

■ **Mental Health Services**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[129942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether funding for all 40 NHS Wellbeing Hubs will continue beyond March 2023.

Will Quince:

The staff mental health and wellbeing hubs were set up in October 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, using additional non-recurrent funding until 2022/23. A final decision is yet to be made on the funding of these hubs for 2023/24.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[131342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 23 January on Mental Health Update, HCWS512, what estimate he has made of the cost of each mental health ambulance.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[131343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 23 January on Mental Health Update, HCWS512, what additional staff training will be required to help provide a range of spaces to support people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[131344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 23 January on Mental Health Update, HCWS512, how many places of safety will be new.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[131345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 23 January on Mental Health Update, HCWS512, whether existing staff will be expected to cover multiple spaces; and what the arrangements for management of spaces will be.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made. NHS England are leading the centralised procurement of the up to 100 mental health ambulances as part of the £150 million capital investment detailed on Monday 23 January at a total cost of £7 million. This total cost is based on a national co-designed specification and benchmark averages.

The £150 million capital investment is also already supporting over 25 schemes which will provide new or improved health-based places of safety and Section 136 suites. Further allocations from the funding are currently being considered by NHS England.

Staffing requirements, training needs, and management arrangements for mental health urgent and emergency care will vary depending on the services and facilities provided in local areas. We are supporting the mental health workforce including through the ambition to deliver an additional 27,000 mental health staff by the end of 2023/24.

■ Monkeypox: Vaccination**Florence Eshalomi:**[\[132615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to roll out the Mpox vaccine; and if his Department will take steps to maintain supplies of that vaccine for higher risk groups in 2023-24.

Maria Caulfield:

Over the summer of 2022, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) procured over 150,000 vials of the mpox vaccine and launched an outbreak response strategy to vaccinate those at highest risk of the virus. As of 19 January 2023, our partners in sexual health services have administered 85,113 doses of the mpox vaccine, which is thought to have had an impact on the very encouraging epidemiological picture currently. UKHSA continue to monitor the epidemiological situation closely and are currently reviewing the vaccination approach to ensure a proportionate way forward for the Financial Year 2023-2024.

Florence Eshalomi:[\[132616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made in delivering the 250,000 doses of the Mpox vaccine for the 125,000 people deemed to be in priority groups for that vaccine.

Maria Caulfield:

To date, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has procured over 150,000 vials of the mpox vaccine. The adoption of intradermal fractional dosing has allowed up to five doses to be administered per vial, which has furthered available stock.

The estimated group size of individuals at highest risk of mpox and therefore eligible for vaccination is 111,000. As of 18 January 2023, in England, a total of 64,740 people have received their first dose of mpox vaccine and 20,373 people have come

forward for their second dose. The rollout of the mpox vaccination campaign has, in combination with other factors, contributed to the marked decline in cases.

UKHSA has also launched an Mpox and Sexual Health Outreach and Engagement Fund to support these efforts.

■ **NHS 111: Staff**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[132550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full time equivalent staff worked for NHS 111 in each year since 2015.

Will Quince:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ **NHS: Drugs**

Chris Green:

[\[129962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of concerns raised by the British Society for Rheumatology with the National Homecare Medicines Committee, Care Quality Commission and General Pharmaceutical Council on the safety and performance of homecare medicines services across England.

Will Quince:

The Department is aware of the British Society for Rheumatology's (BSR) concerns. Providers of Homecare Medicine services to National Health Service patients do so under framework agreements which may be held at national with NHS England and regional at NHS procurement hubs or local at hospital trust level. This requires a high degree of centralised co-ordination for which the National Homecare Medicines Committee (NHMC) supports and advises the NHS on matters relating to homecare medicines services. The committee liaises with homecare providers through their trade association the National Clinical Homecare Association (NCHA) to support and co-ordinate development of the homecare market and discuss any system wide issues.

When the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) indicate that the services levels of a provider on a national NHS England framework or NHS regional framework or contract are not to the standard expected, the NHMC which is managed by and includes representation from NHS England enacts an escalation process which involves meetings with individual providers to discuss safety and performance issues. If necessary, the regulators the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPC) are also informed.

The NCHA and NHMC have met with the British Society for Rheumatology to discuss their concerns. Proposals are currently being discussed between the parties to establish a formal, ongoing dialogue which may also include representation from other medical specialties.

■ **NHS: Pay**

Marsha De Cordova: [\[130048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS staff are paid fairly.

Will Quince:

The Pay Review Body (PRB) process is the established mechanism for determining pay uplifts in the public sector, outside of negotiating multi-year pay and contract reform deals. We have asked the PRBs for recommendations for National Health Service staff in scope for 2023/2024. As the PRBs are independent, we cannot pre-empt their recommendations and we will carefully consider their reports when we receive them later this year.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[130095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the level of pay of NHS workers in England.

Will Quince:

The Government accepted the recommendations of the independent National Health Service Pay Review Body in full for the 2022/23 financial year and have given over one million non-medical NHS workers a pay rise of at least £1,400, pro-rated, this year. The Government has also committed to give NHS workers a pay rise in the 2023/24 financial year.

■ **NHS: Staff**

Chris Green: [\[129964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on trends in the number of (a) nurse and (b) pharmaceutical staff vacancies within the (i) quality assurance and (ii) governance disciplines of homecare medicines services.

Will Quince:

NHS England's Commercial Medicines Unit, which manages the national framework agreements for the provision of homecare medicines services, holds regular engagement meetings with providers on the framework and when appropriate will discuss recruitment and retention of staff. The National Homecare Medicines Committee also holds discussions regarding recruitment, retention and vacancies during engagement meetings with providers when appropriate to do so.

■ **PHE Reproductive Health, Sexual Health and HIV Innovation Fund**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[132613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the independent review of Reproductive Health, Sexual Health and HIV Innovation Fund will be published; and whether his Department is planning to allocate funding to help support innovation in HIV prevention.

Neil O'Brien:

The review of the Reproductive Health, Sexual Health and HIV Innovation Fund is expected to be published by the independent evaluator before the end of February.

Decisions on future investment in the Fund will be made in due course.

Public Health**Darren Jones:**[\[131237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to publish a joint external evaluation on the UK's capacity to (a) prevent, (b) detect and (c) rapidly respond to public health risks occurring (i) naturally and (ii) due to (A) deliberate and (B) accidental events.

Maria Caulfield:

There are no current plans to publish a Joint External Evaluation. The Government works with public and private sector organisations as well as academia to understand capacity and capability needs for pandemic preparedness. The United Kingdom also contributes to global monitoring, for example, by completing the World Health Organizations' (WHO) State-Party Self Assessment Annual Reporting tool (SPAR). There has been no joint evaluation exercise (JEE) conducted to date on the UK's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health risks in the context set out in this question. However, an evaluation of Public Health England was conducted in 2015 as a trail JEE pre-cursor to WHO's current JEE process, this was a smaller scale pre-cursor to the WHO JEE which the UK was asked to help pilot and assess which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/456984/IndependentReport_GHS_acc.pdf

Radiotherapy**Henry Smith:**[\[105334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations his Department has had from the radiotherapy industry during the last 12 months; and how many meetings his Department has had with representatives from that industry in that time period .

Helen Whately:

A search of the Department's records showed that there had been 34 correspondence cases from the radiotherapy industry, including from charities and parliamentary groups, received within the last 12 months. Ministers within the Department have met with representatives of Radiotherapy UK, along with members of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy, on several occasions within the last 12 months.

■ Social Services: Merseyside**Conor McGinn:** [\[131228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many social care beds the Government funds in (a) St Helens and (b) Merseyside.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held by the Department.

■ Social Services: Reform**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[131180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the plan for adult social care system reform.

Helen Whately:

In spring 2023, the Government will publish a plan for adult social care system reform. The plan will build on the progress made so far to implement the 10-year vision set out in the People at the Heart of Care white paper, which was published in December 2021. This will improve access and quality of care, while also building long-term resilience in the sector.

■ Tourette's Syndrome: St Helens**Conor McGinn:** [\[131330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of children under the age of 18 in St Helens who have been diagnosed with Tourette's in the last 12 months.

Neil O'Brien:

This information is not held centrally in the format requested.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access**Daniel Zeichner:** [\[131294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of changes to the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access rebate rate on (a) investment in late-stage clinical trials and (b) patient access to new medicines.

Will Quince:

We have not made a specific assessment of the potential impact of changes to 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS) payment percentages on late-stage clinical trials and access to new medicines. An assessment relevant to these issues was published in December 2022 on the impact of changes to payment percentages in the associated Statutory Scheme for Branded Medicines.

Changes to the VPAS payment percentages reflect the scheme working as intended to adjust for increased sales of branded medicines to the National Health Service and are below the rate projected when the Scheme was agreed with industry in 2018.

The NHS has delivered a record number of access agreements since VPAS was agreed including many world and European-first agreements. The NHS has delivered world-leading uptake of some of the most important cancer and rare disease drugs, while also agreeing deals for a number of new cell and gene therapies.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access: Life Sciences

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[131295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy on the impact of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access on the life sciences sector.

Will Quince:

Ministers in the Department engage regularly with their Ministerial counterparts on a range of issues, including those relating to the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing Access.

HOME OFFICE

■ Airports: Armed Forces

Beth Winter:

[\[130098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many military personnel were deployed at airports to cover those Border Force staff participating in the PCS trade union strike action on (a) 23-26 December and (b) 28-31 December; and if she will breakdown those figures by airport.

Beth Winter:

[\[130099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training was provided to military personnel deployed to cover Border Force staff participating in the PCS trade union strike action on 23-26 December and 28-31 December.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office's priority is to deliver a safe and secure border and we will never compromise on this including during any period of Industrial Action. Border Force maintain 100% checks for all scheduled arriving passengers into the UK and this will be continued during any periods of strike action. Military personnel deployed to cover Border Force staff underwent thorough training before being deployed during strike action; however maintain border security we do not comment on the details of operational deployments.

■ Asylum: Applications

Dan Carden:

[132407]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum applications that were submitted before January 2018 are awaiting a decision as of 25 January 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the [‘Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on asylum applications awaiting a decision can be found in table Asy_D03 of the [‘asylum and resettlement detailed datasets’](#). Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of the workbooks.

Please note the Home Office does not publish this data by application date. It shows a snapshot of the last day of the quarter. The latest data relates to applications awaiting a decision as at 30 September 2022. Data as at 31 December 2022 will be published on 23 February 2023. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [‘Research and statistics calendar’](#).

■ Asylum: Children

Seema Malhotra:

[129804]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

Robert Jenrick:

The safety and wellbeing of those in our care is our primary concern.

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.

Seema Malhotra:

[129805]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will place a copy of the internal risk register on unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the Library of the House.

Robert Jenrick:

We currently have no plans to place a copy of a risk register in the Library of the House.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[130039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to ensure that children asylum seekers are not abducted from the hotels they are temporarily housed in.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[130068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many child asylum seekers were (a) registered as missing from hotels and (b) found after being registered as missing in 2022.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[130087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many child asylum seekers have been registered as missing in each of the last 5 years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office has no power to hold asylum seekers, including under 18s, in hotels or any temporary accommodation if they wish to leave.

To minimise the risk of a minor going missing, records of those leaving and returning to the hotel are kept and monitored. Support workers accompany children off site on activities and social excursions, or where specific vulnerabilities are identified.

We have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in temporary hotel accommodation are as safe and supported as possible 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 social workers and nurses.

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 ensure that they are safe.

The number of all missing asylum seekers are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

In 2022 there were 411 missing episodes from Home Office UASC Hotels. The young person was subsequently located for 218 of these 411 missing episodes.

Of the minors that are still missing; they breakdown as: 87% Albanians. The other 13% are Afghanistan (6%), Egypt (3%) and the remaining 6% are from India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam. 14 were under 16 when they went missing and one was a female.

Seema Malhotra:

[\[131189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees on missing asylum-seeking minors.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office engages with a range of internal and external stakeholders in relation to the provision of support and accommodation to destitute asylum seekers, through a variety of channels.

There have not been any bilateral discussions between the Home Office and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on missing asylum seeking children.

UNHCR do attend the Strategic Engagement Groups which, together with the associated sub-groups, are the Home Office's principal engagement forums with external asylum and resettlement Non-Government Organisations and voluntary sector stakeholders.

■ Asylum: Hove**Ian Byrne:****[132558]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to recent reports of the abduction of unaccompanied children from a Home Office residence in Hove, what urgent steps her Department is taking to ensure the (a) safety and (b) welfare of children who (i) are missing, (i) were missing but have been found and (c) are living at that residence.

Robert Jenrick:

The rise in dangerous small boats crossings means there are significant challenges on providing local authority care places for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). Out of necessity and with the best interests of the child in mind, we have accommodated UASC on an emergency and temporary basis in hotels while placements with local authorities have been vigorously pursued. This work is led by dedicated team leaders and support workers who provide 24/7 supervision

We take our safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. We have robust safeguarding procedures in place to ensure UASC in hotels are as safe and supported as possible as we seek urgent placements with a local authority. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of social workers and nurses. All children receive a welfare interview which includes questions designed to identify potential indicators of trafficking or safeguarding issues and subsequent safeguarding plans are put in place.

Records are kept and monitored of children leaving and returning to the hotel. Support workers will accompany children off site on activities and social excursions, or where specific vulnerabilities are identified. The Home Office has no power to hold children in hotels or any temporary accommodation if they wish to leave.

When a young person goes missing the 'missing persons protocol' is followed and led by our directly engaged social workers. Missing After Reasonable Steps (MARS) is a new protocol which enables children's homes and supported accommodation placements to have more ownership over the missing episodes of children within their care.

We engage with the local police and work in conjunction with the Local Authorities (LA) children's services to invoke a missing child multi agency strategy meeting chaired by children's services.

■ Asylum: ICT

Dan Carden:

[129975]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2023 to Question 117811, whether his Department is aware of any other technical IT faults with the asylum application process.

Robert Jenrick:

In pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2023 to Question 117811, the Home Office can confirm we are not currently aware of any other further submission cases that have encountered the same issues.

The Asylum Transformation programme aims to bring the system back into balance and modernise it.

As part of transforming the asylum system, we are focused on increasing productivity by streamlining, simplifying, and digitising processes to speed up decision making.

■ Asylum: Myanmar

Stephen Kinnock:

[131299]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Myanmar nationals claimed asylum in the UK in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the ['Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'](#). Data on asylum applications by nationality can be found in table Asy_D01 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 relate to the year ending September 2022. Data for the year ending December 2022 will be published on 23 February 2023. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the ['Research and statistics calendar'](#).

■ Asylum: Southport

Damien Moore:

[128707]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the delay in announcing the decision on the housing of asylum seekers in Pontins in Southport on the provision of public services by Sefton Council.

Robert Jenrick:

Whenever we pursue accommodation, a decision will be made and following collaborative and in-depth discussions regarding the accommodation and the services which might be required by councils and other government departments.

■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Damien Moore: [\[130017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will permit the creation of new asylum accommodation sites in areas which a local authority has deemed unsuitable.

Robert Jenrick:

To inform decision making regarding an asylum accommodation centre, we would engage in collaborative and in-depth discussions about the accommodation and what services might be required with the local authority and other government departments.

■ Cannabidiol

Crispin Blunt: [\[R\] \[131103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' consumer cannabidiol products cover letter and report published on 17 December 2021.

Chris Philp:

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.

■ Diplomatic Service: Immigration Controls

Fabian Hamilton: [\[131150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what Border Control procedures are in place for British (a) Ambassadors and (b) High Commissioners when they re-enter the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

British Ambassadors and High Commissioners are required to satisfactorily establish their identity and nationality when entering the UK in the same way as any other British citizen.

■ Gender Based Violence

Marsha De Cordova: [\[130032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to tackle violence against women and girls.

Miss Sarah Dines:

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a government priority. VAWG is an unacceptable, preventable issue which blights the lives of millions.

We have made significant progress since we published the Tackling VAWG Strategy in July 2021 and the complementary Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan in March 2022, including action to tackle the causes of these crimes. This includes supporting the introduction of a new full-time National Policing Lead for VAWG, DCC Maggie Blyth, to help strengthen the police response as well as ratifying the Istanbul Convention on 21 July 2022.

The Government recently announced that we are supporting the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP's Protection from Sex-Based Harassment in Public Bill, which would make public sexual harassment a specific offence. It provides that if someone commits an offence under existing section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986 (intentionally causing harassment, alarm or distress) and did so because of the victim's sex, then they could obtain a higher sentence.

Last year we launched our national communications campaign, 'Enough', to challenge the harmful behaviours that exist within wider society, educate young people about healthy relationships and consent, and ensure victims can recognise abuse and receive support. Phase two of the campaign started on 25 October.

In addition, this year the government has launched the ongoing VAWG Support and Specialist Service Fund and the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Intervention Fund. The former sees the Ministry of Justice and Home Office committing up to £8.4 million of funding for specialised victims' support services over two years. The latter seeks to award grant funding of up to £36 million over two years to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to deliver interventions for domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators.

New duties on Tier 1 local authorities in England, included in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 1st October 2021, ensuring victims and their children across England can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it. On 12 December 2022 we announced a further two years of government funding - £127.3 million and £129.7 million for the delivery of these duties in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

■ Home Office: Equality**Chris Stephens:****[R] [128662]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department complies with section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code; and whether that monitoring data gathered is shared with union representatives.

Chris Philp:

The Civil Service has made good progress in recent years in diversifying its workforce. The percentage of civil servants from an ethnic minority background is at 15.0% and the percentage of those who declare themselves disabled is at 14.0%.

Staff who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGBO) is 6.1% and the proportion of female civil servants stands at 54.5%. These rates are all at their highest recorded levels. However, we know there is more to be achieved to ensure we are representative of the citizens we serve across all our grades.

The new Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 recognises our success and builds on this good work to encourage a broader range of people into the Civil Service to give depth to our understanding of contemporary society in the United Kingdom. It provides the necessary framing for diversity and inclusion activity in the Civil Service as part of our wider workforce strategy, and through that, how the Civil Service delivers for its people, the government and our citizens.

A link to the Civil Service statistics can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/civil-service-statistics>

The Home Office undertakes the collation of diversity data of our workforce, which includes age, gender, ethnic origin, disability, and (in Northern Ireland) community background of staff and applicants as set out in para 2.1.6 in the civil service management code. This data is used to undertake monitoring and analysis of recruitment, career development including progression, resignations, personal review, salary, performance pay, and access to opportunities for training and personal development. This data is also used to ensure the department discharges its public sector equality duties under s.149 the Equality Act 2010; data is used to routinely inform equality impact assessments where appropriate to effectively consider the different impacts of policies, processes and services across the workforce.

The Home Office also captures data on the professions and job roles which our people undertake. This allows us to understand and monitor the diversity of our workforce in professions and business areas. The Home Office publishes its workforce data annually on GOV.UK

The Home Office is fully committed to the provision of diversity data to its recognised trade unions with available information supplied on a regular basis. However, it should be noted that section 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code (CSMC) does not place an obligation on the department to share the information collected on staff and applicants with their representative trade unions.

Detailed information on the Civil Service workforce is collected and published centrally as part of the Annual Civil Service Employment Statistics.

■ Home Office: Holiday Leave

Chris Stephens:

[R] [132471]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office Annual Leave policy outlines the different options available to employees in relation to managing their leave. In exceptional circumstances where an employee has been unable to take all of their annual leave as a result of unavoidable extra duties it may be possible for them to sell back some of their annual leave with the agreement of their head of unit. The amount that an employee may sell is limited under the Working Time Regulations.

The Home Office leave year runs from 1 March – 28 February. Ahead of the end of the leave year managers and employees will be reminded about the need to manage leave balances and the options available to them.

■ Immigration: Appeals**Alison Thewliss:**[\[132402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the correspondence with the hon. Member for Glasgow Central of 5 January 2023, reference ZA24239, what the oldest allowed appeal awaiting processing is as of 25 January 2023; and how many allowed appeals are awaiting processing.

Robert Jenrick:

The requested information cannot be accurately extracted from our internal systems. To provide this information would require a manual trawl of successful appeals and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Where an appeal has been allowed in favour of the appellant, and is not subject to onward appeal, we take all reasonable steps to implement the allowed appeal in a timely manner.

■ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration: Powers**Ruth Jones:**[\[124084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the powers of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is committed to being transparent to ensure that the department is as open as possible to all types of scrutiny, both internal and external.

■ Key Workers: Vetting**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[129861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of exempting key workers from fees for DBS checks.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is a non-departmental public body, established in 2012 under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. Current legislation

dictates that DBS must charge a fee for Disclosure applications in all cases, with the exception of applications made by volunteers. The DBS is required to operate on a full cost-recovery basis and is dependent on applications for certificates. The fees for applications for certificates are prescribed under the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002. There are currently no plans to exempt key workers from fees for DBS checks.

Current fees for DBS applications were reduced through secondary legislation in April 2022 to their lowest ever levels, benefitting all applicants, including key workers. Fees are reviewed on an annual basis.

■ National Crime Agency: Asylum

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[132324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many National Crime Agency officers were working on the issue of missing child asylum seekers as of 25 January 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

For security reasons, we do not disclose how many staff are working on an issue at a given time. The National Police Chiefs Council, Home Office Immigration and Border Force are focused on the missing child asylum seekers. The Home Office is working closely with policing and local authorities.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

David Simmonds:

[\[128737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on how many LGBT+ Afghans have been admitted to the UK since the end of Operation Pitting.

Robert Jenrick:

People who apply for Entry Clearance to come to the UK are normally required to attend a Visa Application Centre (VAC) to enrol their biometric information. We published guidance on Gov.UK in November 2022 which explains who can be excused or deferred from having to enrol their biometric information.

Non urgent requests for applications to be predetermined, or for individuals to be excused the requirement to attend a VAC to enrol their biometric information are being placed on hold. This is pending the publication of new guidance about how the department handles claims from individuals that it is unsafe for them to travel to a VAC.

We do not currently collate or publish information on how many applications are predetermined or the number of people who are excused from having to attend a VAC to enrol their biometrics.

■ Refugees: Families

Carol Monaghan: [\[132511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current average processing times are for Refugee Family Reunion applications inside the rules.

Carol Monaghan: [\[132512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current average processing times are for Refugee Family Reunion applications outside the rules.

Robert Jenrick:

All applications for refugee family reunion are made on the same visa application form. It is only when an application has been considered that it can be established whether the application falls within the criteria of the Rules or not.

Information regarding processing times is not routinely published and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

We are committed to improving and speeding up processing times for family reunion applications. We are reviewing processes to streamline decision making to enable us to provide a better service to our customers. We always prioritise applications where there is an evidenced urgent or compelling reason to do so.

■ Safety Belts: Fines

Matt Western: [\[128692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were fined for not wearing seatbelts in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on fixed penalty notices and other outcomes resulting from motoring offences, including seatbelt offences. The latest data cover the calendar year ending 31 December 2021, and are available here: [Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Data on fixed penalty notices issued for seat belt offences by year are published in table FPN_03 of the accompanying [data tables](#).

■ Slavery

Jess Phillips: [\[131309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much the Home Office spent on employing caseworkers to make conclusive grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism in financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23 to date.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Single Competent Authority (SCA) and the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA) are currently recruiting a large number of new decision makers

across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and reduce decision making timescales; this brings additional resource pressures initially (for training and upskilling) but will have substantial long-term benefits for decision making timescales.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) does not publish payments made to victims of modern slavery and this does not currently form part of the published NRM statistics.

All victims who consent to receiving support will receive this via the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) in England and Wales which is delivered by The Salvation Army. Details of the MSVC Contract can be found in a redacted version of the contract requirements here: [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/modern-slavery-victim-care-contract-requirements-2019-2023.pdf)

All victims who consented to support under the previous Victim Care Contract were also eligible for financial support under the same policy and a redacted version of the previous contract requirements can be found here (<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e03ceb15-27ad-4bad-b8ae-43dbc1e9481e>).

As of September 2019, following a CG decision, financial support needs for those in support are considered in a Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) as part of a holistic assessment of recovery need, as per the published RNA policy.”

Jess Phillips:

[131310]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department spent on subsistence payments for people awaiting a conclusive grounds decision in the National Referral Mechanism for Modern Slavery in financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23 to date.

Robert Jenrick:

The Single Competent Authority (SCA) and the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA) are currently recruiting a large number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and reduce decision making timescales.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) does not publish payments made to victims of modern slavery and this does not currently form part of the published NRM statistics.

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All victims who consented to support under the previous Victim Care Contract are eligible for financial support under the same policy and a redacted version of the

previous contract requirements can be found here: (<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e03ceb15-27ad-4bad-b8ae-43dbc1e9481e>).

■ Visas: Biometrics

Marsha De Cordova: [\[130065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times she (a) predetermined an application before a person attended and (b) excused the requirement to attend a Visa Application Centre to enrol their biometrics for a visa in 2022; and on how many of those occasions the applicant was in Afghanistan and (i) able and (ii) unable to travel safely to another country.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[130066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what criteria she decides whether to (a) predetermine an application before a person attends and (b) excuse the requirement to attend a Visa Application Centre to enrol their biometrics for a visa.

Robert Jenrick:

People who apply for Entry Clearance to come to the UK are normally required to attend a Visa Application Centre (VAC) to enrol their biometric information. We published guidance on Gov.UK in November 2022 which explains who can be excused or deferred from having to enrol their biometric information.

Non-urgent requests for applications to be predetermined, or for individuals to be excused the requirement to attend a VAC to enrol their biometric information are being placed on hold. This is pending the publication of new guidance about how the department handles claims from individuals that it is unsafe for them to travel to a VAC.

We do not currently collate or publish information on how many applications are predetermined or the number of people who are excused from having to attend a VAC to enrol their biometrics.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Air Conditioning

Justin Madders: [\[129887\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, how much has been spent on air filtration systems on the Parliamentary estate in each of the last three years.

Sir Charles Walker:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: Air filtration systems are maintained as part of a wider contract and the information cannot be provided at this level of detail. In 2022/23 to date £15,777.43 has been spent on parts relating to air filtration systems.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE■ **Africa: Climate Change****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[128615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to help support participation by (a) African states, (b) the African Union and (c) the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate launched on 19 January 2023.

Greg Hands:

The UK is committed to working with African partners to ensure trade supports long-term climate action.

The Secretary of State for International Trade participated in the inaugural meeting of the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, alongside 7 African trade ministers.

■ **Iron and Steel: Russia****Bill Esterson:**[\[131198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 119982 on Iron and Steel: Russia, if she will take steps to prevent steel exported from Russia from entering the UK through third countries.

Andrew Bowie:

The UK Government does not speculate on future sanctions measures as to do so could reduce their impact. We will continue to apply pressure against Putin and his regime, until Ukraine prevails, or Putin ends his war of choice.

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave him on 17 January 2023, UIN 119982, for further detail on the measures on iron and steel taken to date.

■ **Trade Agreements****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[131282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how often her Department plans to conduct ex-post evaluations of the implementation of new free trade agreements.

Greg Hands:

The government has committed to publishing evaluations of each of the UK-Japan, UK-Australia and UK-New Zealand agreements, within 5 years of each agreement's entry into force.

■ **Trade Agreements: Monitoring****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[131283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department will take to monitor the impact of newly implemented free trade agreements on (a) the climate, (b) labour rights and (c) human rights; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

Newly implemented trade agreements provide for institutional mechanisms for compliance monitoring of labour and climate provisions. The Department for International Trade has established independent advisory bodies to monitor compliance and advise on the implementation of climate and labour provisions.

■ Trade Agreements: USA**Chi Onwurah:**[\[129801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 20 January 2023 to Question 123935, on Trade Agreements: USA, whether any projects involving (a) new cooperation on digital trade or (b) securing supply chains have resulted from the talks held in Boston and Edinburgh; and if she will list the joint projects on SME tools to support UK and US firms mentioned in that Answer.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 26 January 2023]: Following the UK-US small and medium sized enterprises (SME) Dialogue in Edinburgh, the UK and US governments agreed to convene government officials for expert-level discussions on digital trade and customs and trade facilitation, and identify opportunities for deeper cooperation on digital issues and paperless trading. The UK and US also agreed to update and enhance resources for SME exporters, such as the existing toolkits on intellectual property and doing business in the UK and the US.

■ Trade Promotion: India**Chi Onwurah:**[\[126638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has taken steps to consult with the UK based Indian diaspora during the process of choosing (a) trade envoys and (b) delegations to India; and whether her Department holds a list of Indian diaspora organisations.

Andrew Bowie:

The UK is home to a vibrant Indian diaspora that contributes to the UK's culture, innovation, and economy.

To help support the growth of UK businesses with trade and investment opportunities in India, including business delegations, the Department for International Trade (DIT) engages with groups such as the UK India Business Council, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Confederation of Indian Industry and the India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group, as well as the relevant teams at the High Commission of India. These organisations engage with a wide range of groups in the UK and India.

JUSTICE■ **Bail: Sexual Offences**

Steve Reed: [\[132492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of number of defendants accused of (a) rape and (b) sexual assault who have been given conditional release on bail in each year since 2010.

Edward Argar:

Information on the number of defendants given conditional bail by the courts is not centrally recorded in the Court Proceeding Database held by the Ministry of Justice and to obtain it would involve a manual interrogation of court records which would result in a disproportionate cost to the department.

■ **Bereavement Counselling**

Priti Patel: [\[127750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to introduce an independent public advocate to support bereaved families.

Mike Freer:

The Government is committed to supporting bereaved families after public disasters, including their participation in any inquests and inquiries. Proposals to introduce an Independent Public Advocate were the subject of a public consultation in 2018 and we are carefully considering the best way forward in light of the responses received and recent work.

■ **Community Orders**

Steve Reed: [\[131221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2023 to Question 125370 on Community Orders, how many hours of community service were given as part of community sentences in each (a) local justice area and (b) region in England and Wales in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

As detailed in previous submissions, including PQ125370, it is not possible to segment by Local Justice Area as this is not recorded.

For the period April 2014 to December 2022, 56,770,559 hours of Community Service have been imposed as a part of community sentences and suspended sentence orders. Please find data in the attached table.

These have been segmented by Probation Region. Where prior to unification (July 2021), locations have been mapped to current region. Where mapping has not been possible, due to ambiguous locations, these have been grouped as 'Unknown Region'.

Please note the final year of data is not a full year, covering the period 01/04/22 - 31/12/22.

It has not been possible to provide data prior to April 2014. This date marked the completion of Transforming Rehabilitation's migration of data to the National Delius system. Prior to this, the use of multiple differing local recording systems has resulted in less robust data which cannot be used with confidence, in response to this PQ.

A significant dip in performance can be seen in the years 2019/20 and 2020/21, which is attributed to the pandemic. Community Payback was severely affected by projects, and organisations that provided them, being closed, along with the social distancing rules making it difficult for delivery to continue as normal

This Government has committed to invest an additional £93million in Community Payback over the next three years. This is to increase delivery up to 8 million hours per year, focussing on robust community projects that help to improve public spaces, ensuring that people can see justice being done.

Attachments:

1. Table_131221 [[2023-01-30 131221 Table.xlsx](#)]

Steve Reed:

[131222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 4 January 2023 to Question 125370 on Community Orders, how many hours of community service were not carried out in each (a) local justice area and (b) region in England and Wales in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

As detailed in previous submissions, including PQ 125370, it is not possible to segment by Local Justice Area as this is not recorded.

This data in the attachment shows the total hours recorded as not carried out at termination of the requirement, by business year, by region for the entire period 01/04/2014 – 31/12/2022.

The dataset covers reasons hours are not carried out including offender deaths, deportation, orders revoked, and resentenced, successful appeals and Suspended Sentence Order (SSO) activated.

For context: In 2019-2020, pre pandemic, Probation delivered 4,869,778 hours of unpaid work nationally. Between the 1 April 2022 and the 31 December 2022 (not a full year), Probation delivered 3,220,827 hours. We estimate that this will project to a full year delivery total of 4,294,436. All efforts are made to work hours, but where that is not possible then robust action is taken. For hours not worked due to non-compliance, enforcement action will be taken. Where it is not possible to work hours due to specific risk factors orders will be returned to the court.

Please note data supplied in all 3 PQs 125370, 131221, 131222 do not allow for a direct comparison due to each dataset examining a different timeframe; start, delivery and completion date.

Data has been segmented by Probation Region. Where prior to unification (July 2021), locations have been mapped to current region. Where mapping has not been possible, due to ambiguous locations, these have been grouped as 'Unknown Region'.

It has not been possible to provide data prior to April 2014.

In the years 2019/20 and 2020/21, Community Payback was severely impacted by the pandemic and the resulting court backlogs. This included projects and organisations that provided placements being closed, along with the social distancing rules making it difficult for delivery to continue as normal.

This Government has committed to invest an additional £93million in Community Payback over the next three years. This is so that we ramp up delivery to 8million hours per year, focussing on outdoor projects that help to improve public spaces, ensuring that people can see justice being done.

Attachments:

1. Table_131222 [[2023-01-30 PQ 131222 table.xlsx](#)]

■ **Community Orders: Females**

Ellie Reeves:

[[129972](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will (a) make assessment of the effectiveness of existing funding and (b) take steps to establish a cross-Departmental fund for women's community services.

Damian Hinds:

Further to the £9.5 million invested in the women's community sector since the publication of the Female Offender Strategy in June 2018, in September 2022 we announced funding of up to £21 million until 2025. All MoJ grant funding is subject to a rigorous bid process that requires successful recipients to report on the effectiveness of funding.

An Impact Assessment will be published alongside the forthcoming Female Offender Strategy Delivery Plan that will include an estimate of the number of additional women that could be supported through women's services as a result of our funding.

The effectiveness of our funding for women's community services will be evaluated and inform future funding decisions, overseen by the Ministerial Women in Criminal Justice System board.

■ **Crimes of Violence: Reoffenders**

Steve Reed:

[[132488](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of Serious Further Offences committed in each year since 2010.

Steve Reed:

[132489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will provide a breakdown of type of offence of Serious Further Offence committed in each year since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

I refer the honourable Member for Croydon North to the answer I gave on 20 January 2023, to Question UIN 125451: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-17/125451>.

■ Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences: Trials

Emily Thornberry:

[131154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) total and (b) effective trials for (i) rape and (ii) sexual offences excluding rape there were in each quarter between 1 October 2021 and 30 September 2022.

Edward Argar:

Data on total and effective trials in the Crown Court can be found in the attached tables (table 1 for rape offences and table 2 for sexual offences excluding rape).

There are a number of reasons why a trial may be ineffective, including witness absence, insufficient juror availability and the defence not being ready.

Attachments:

1. Table [\[2023-01-30 PQ 131154 \(table\).xlsx\]](#)

■ Fraud: Trials

Emily Thornberry:

[131157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) total and (b) effective trials for fraud offences there were in each quarter from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022.

Edward Argar:

Data on quarterly total and effective trials in the Crown Court are published in the Trial effectiveness at the criminal courts tool published as part of the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly release. These include a breakdown by select offences, including fraud offences.

■ Judges and Prison Officers: Disciplinary Proceedings

Philip Davies:

[129774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what happens to the disciplinary records of (a) judges and (b) prison officers when they change (i) gender and (ii) name.

Mike Freer:

1. The Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice are jointly responsible for judicial discipline. They are supported by the independent Judicial Conduct Investigations Office, which keeps a record of disciplinary findings made against Judicial Office Holders. Those records are kept indefinitely, and any disciplinary sanctions taken

against Judicial Office Holders are published on the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office website. A subsequent change of gender and/name by a Judicial Office Holder would have no bearing on the retention of disciplinary records. Should a Judicial Office Holder with a published disciplinary sanction against them subsequently change their name, a note would be made to the published sanction which would identify this.

1. In relation to prison officers, processes are available to support the changing of an individual's name and other characteristics within departmental HR records. Regardless of an individual's gender or name, disciplinary records are retained in line with departmental document retention policies.

■ Ministry of Justice: Equality

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[128664](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

Mike Freer:

People related data is fundamental to monitoring the effectiveness of our policies and making people related decisions. The MoJ is a data-driven department and our workforce data is collated through a number of different mechanisms including from our HR System (SOP), our recruitment system (Oleeeo) and the annual People Survey.

The Ministry of Justice collects data on age, gender, ethnic origin and disability as part of the application process. This diversity data is analysed quarterly to produce internal reporting on the outcomes of the recruitment process for each group. Data on gender, ethnic origin and disability for HMPPS recruitment outcomes are published externally every six months in the HM Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly.

We collect protected characteristic diversity data from staff on our HR system. Using this we produce a variety of internal management information that we use within MoJ to monitor fairness of processes.

This data is routinely shared across MoJ to help inform tactical, operational and strategic people related decision and to monitor and evaluate our policies and the decisions that have been made.

In England, in addition to the general duty, all public bodies have specific duties to publish annual equality information and prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years, which the Ministry of Justice makes available in the public domain.

To comply with the specific duties of the Equality Act (PSED, 2010), MoJ staff in post diversity information is published in the annual Civil Service Statistics data tables.

Key staff diversity figures are also included in the MoJ Annual Report and Accounts (ARA).

MoJ shares data (referenced in 2.1.6 of the Civil Service Management Code) with its recognised Trade Unions as part of regular engagement and statutory obligations

■ **Ministry of Justice: Minimum Wage**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[129901](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Mike Freer:

I can confirm that all Ministry of Justice employees are currently paid above the rate of National Minimum Wage.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Trade Unions**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [[127800](#)]

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

Mike Freer:

The MoJ shares Human Resources information related to:

- Contractual terms and conditions of employment
- Working practices and proposed changes to the way the MoJ is structured or operates
- Workforce data
- Information required to comply with statutory requirements

This information is shared with the MoJ departmental trade unions on a regular basis as part of ongoing engagement. There is also a range of HR information published on GOV.UK which is publicly available and an MoJ data portal with further information.

■ **Prisons: Education**

Ellie Reeves:

[[132518](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much funding his Department has provided for education in prisons in England and Wales in the 2022-23 financial year; and what this funding has been spent on.

Damian Hinds:

The full details on financial spend during this period will only be available following reconciliation which will be undertaken during financial year 2023-24.

In Wales, prison education is a devolved responsibility to the Welsh Government therefore we are unable to provide these figures.

■ Probation: Training**Ellie Reeves:** [\[132505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what is the annual training budget for the Probation Service, excluding costs related to the Professional Qualification in Probation.

Damian Hinds:

This information is not available centrally.

■ Rape: Trials**Steve Reed:** [\[132494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the average length of time a (a) witness and (b) defendant is in a court witness box during a rape court case.

Edward Argar:

Information on the average length of time a witness and defendant is in a court witness box is not held by the Ministry of Justice.

In June 2021, we published the End-to-End Rape Review Report and Action Plan. We committed to delivering real improvements to transform support for victims, including improving the court experience.

We have already rolled out pre-recorded cross examination 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 also introduced the Specialist Sexual Violence Support project in three Crown Court locations.

■ Sexual Offences**Steve Reed:** [\[132412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the number of (a) rape and (b) other sexual assault cases disposed of through voluntary dismissal in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

This information is not held centrally.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Buildings: Battersea****Marsha De Cordova:** [\[127897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what active remediation work is taking place on buildings with unsafe cladding in Battersea.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[127898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many buildings in Battersea have been identified as having unsafe cladding.

Lee Rowley:

As of 31 December 2022, a total of 18 residential buildings over 18 metres in height in the constituency of Battersea have been identified as having unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding or have been deemed eligible for the Building Safety Fund due to the presence of unsafe non-ACM cladding. Remediation work has started or been completed on 9 of these buildings. The Department does not hold data on the location of mid-rise buildings with unsafe external wall systems.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 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.

Dehenna Davison:

The department adheres with CS Management Code and workforce equalities data is shared regularly with relevant trade unions, such as the Departmental Trade Union Side.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Holiday Leave**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[132465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

Dehenna Davison:

The department does not currently have such a policy.

■ **Elections: Proof of Identity**

Helen Morgan:

[\[131403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications for Voter Authority Certificates have been submitted since 17 January 2023.

Lee Rowley:

The department will be regularly publishing information on applications for Voter Authority Certificates.

■ Help to Buy Scheme**Karin Smyth:**[\[132416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on the potential merits of extending the Help to Buy Practical Completion deadline of 31 January 2023 in exceptional circumstances.

Lucy Frazer:

We have extended the Help to Buy deadline to 17 March to make sure people do not lose out on their homes because developers have not met the building deadline.

■ High Rise Flats: Battersea**Marsha De Cordova:**[\[127899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether a contract has been signed for unsafe cladding remediation work on Sesame apartments in Battersea.

Lee Rowley:

The Department has awarded £6.1 million of funding to remediate unsafe cladding on Sesame Apartments but the building owner is yet to sign and return the grant funding agreement. Building owners have a legal responsibility to make their buildings safe, even where the government is funding the cladding remediation costs. We have engaged with building owners and managing agents on the terms of the funding agreement which are fair, proportionate and accurately reflect the implementation of the Building Safety Act. The owner of Sesame Apartments must act now to fix the buildings and if they do not we will support regulators in taking enforcement action.

■ Housing: Biodiversity**Tracey Crouch:**[\[128621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing (a) swift blocks and (b) other biodiversity measures for new homes as part of his proposals for reform of the planning system.

Lucy Frazer:

The National Planning Policy Framework currently sets out that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, by minimising impact on biodiversity and providing biodiversity net gains. The Environment Act 2021 introduced new requirements for most developments to provide a biodiversity net gain compared to the sites pre-development state.

Planning conditions or obligations can, in appropriate circumstances, be used to require that a planning permission provides for works that will measurably increase biodiversity. Local authorities can prioritise specific species such as swifts.

We are currently consulting on going further in our consultation on the future of national planning policy. Specifically we are seeking views on how we can strengthen policy and associated national design guidance to promote small-scale changes that can enhance biodiversity and support wildlife recovery. We would welcome responses to this consultation.

■ **Leasehold: Ground Rent**

Stephen Kinnock: [\[128648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of management companies increasing ground rent by the retail price index on leaseholders.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[128649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to regulate the amount by which management companies can increase ground rents.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [51935](#) on 23 September 2022.

■ **Levelling Up Fund**

Gavin Newlands: [\[129950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department informed local authorities of the information detailed in Section 4.4 of his Department's guidance entitled Levelling Up Fund Round 2: explanatory note on the assessment and decision-making process, published on 19 January 2023.

Gavin Newlands: [\[129951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the expenditure incurred by local authorities which made successful bids through the first round of Levelling-Up Funding in preparing and submitting bids under the second round of that Fund.

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[131152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much and what proportion of Levelling Up Fund Round 2 funding was allocated to (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[131471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the assessment criteria of the Levelling Up Fund prevented Local Authorities which submitted successful bids in the first round from receiving funding in the second round for different constituencies within their area.

Grahame Morris:[\[132353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reasons his Department changed the criteria for the Levelling Up Fund after bids were submitted to prevent successful local councils from receiving funding in future rounds.

Grahame Morris:[\[132355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what specific (a) data on deprivation and (b) economic data his Department considered when determining which bids to the second round of the levelling up fund would be successful.

Grahame Morris:[\[132356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether Local Authorities will receive feedback on unsuccessful levelling up bids.

Grahame Morris:[\[132357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether local councils who were unsuccessful in the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 will be able to resubmit bids for next round of funding.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [129836](#) on 26 January 2023.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[132295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2023 to Question 127714 on Levelling Up Fund, if he will take steps to estimate the average cost to local authorities of applying to the Levelling Up Fund.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [129836](#) on 26 January 2023.

Grahame Morris:[\[132354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of creating a specific levelling up fund for former coalfield communities; and if he will commission a levelling up review to consider that matter.

Dehenna Davison:

Former coalfield communities are benefiting from the Levelling Up Fund, which just announced a second round of successful projects, including transport decarbonisation in the North East.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Janet Daby:

[\[131448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 23 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Lewisham East, reference JD29336.

Dehenna Davison:

I apologise for the delay in responding to the Hon. Member's correspondence. The Department attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence from Honourable Members. A response was issued to the Hon. Member on 30 January 2023.

■ **Refugees: Ukraine**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[131347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Ukrainian households in Wales received homelessness assistance from their local authority in each month of 2022.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[131348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Ukrainian households with dependent children in Wales received homelessness assistance from their local authority in 2022.

Felicity Buchan:

Local authority homelessness assistance is a devolved matter in Wales, but the UK Government works closely with colleagues in the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales on the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

As part of that scheme, local authorities receive funding – a tariff – per arrival which includes resource to allow local authorities to provide statutory homelessness services if required.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Mould**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[128710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to tackle damp and mould in social housing.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Question UIN [126650](#) on 26 January 2023.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[124072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what guidance his Department has provided to local authorities on publishing their investment plans since local spending plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund were approved.

Dehenna Davison:

My department has required local authorities to publish information regarding the delivery of the UKSPF in its area, by publishing a summary of the investment plan and activities being funded in the area. Where delivery in Northern Ireland is led by UK Government, we have published the investment plan.

■ **Woodhouse Colliery****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[131160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what advice he received from his officials before making the decision on the recently approved coal mine in Whitehaven, Cumbria.

Lucy Frazer:

The reasons for the Secretary of State's decision are set out in full in his published [Decision Letter](#) , it would be improper to offer further comment at this time.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **Northern Ireland Office: Minimum Wage****Chris Stephens:****[R]** [\[129903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many and what proportion of employees in their Department are paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Mr Steve Baker:

Northern Ireland Office pay is in line with Civil Service pay principles and Ministry of Justice policy. There are no employees in the Northern Ireland Office currently paid at the rate of the National Minimum Wage or below. The Ministry of Justice pay deal for the current pay remit year offer to the most junior staff grade is £19,932 (Band F/AA). The most junior grade employed by the Northern Ireland Office are Band E/AO.

SCOTLAND■ **European Union: Scotland****Owen Thompson:**[\[129916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Answer of 23 January to Question 126735 on European Union: Scotland, what evidence he used to determine that there is no desire in Scotland to have membership of the EU in his Oral Contribution on Impact of Leaving the EU on 11 Januarys 2023, Official Report, Column 546.

Mr Alister Jack:

Polling is clear the people of Scotland want their currency to be Sterling. I was clear in my contribution of 11 January, the people of Scotland do not favour abandoning Sterling in order to create a new, temporary currency that would require to be superseded by the Euro.

■ Scotland Office: Disease Control**Daisy Cooper:**[\[131398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether their Department has purchased mobile UV virus irradiation units.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office has not purchased mobile UV virus irradiation units.

■ Scotland Office: Holiday Leave**Chris Stephens:****[R]** [\[132474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether his Department has notified staff to (a) tell or (b) remind them that they can sell annual leave in the last four months.

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.

All staff have easy access to all HR policies and guidance through their employing departments' intranet. This includes departmental policies and guidance on managing annual leave.

TRANSPORT**■ Avanti West Coast: Standards****Navendu Mishra:**[\[131360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 122286 on Train Operating Companies: Standards, which of the listed companies will conduct the contract scorecard evaluation for Avanti West Coast; and what time period the evaluation will cover.

Huw Merriman:

The next evaluation for Avanti West Coast will evaluate the Performance Based Fee period of 16 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. A number of evaluators will be sourced from each of the supply chains (Atkins, Jacobs, Arup, Costain and Steer) to provide a wider experience of knowledge, skills and expertise.

Navendu Mishra:[\[131361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2023 to Question 122286 on Train Operating Companies: Standards, what estimate he has made of how long it will take the independent evaluator to perform the contract scorecard evaluation for Avanti West Coast.

Huw Merriman:

The next evaluation for Avanti West Coast will evaluate the Performance Based Fee (PBF) period of 16 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. The independent evaluation will run for approximately 11 weeks from the end of the PBF period (23 July 2023).

■ Bus Services: East of England**Daisy Cooper:**[\[131379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of disparities in bus funding between neighbouring authorities on the East of England region's ability to create an integrated cross-boundary bus network.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government provides over £200 million directly to bus operators every year through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to keep fares down and assist with maintaining an extensive network. A further £42 million in BSOG funding is provided directly to local transport authorities (LTAs) every year to subsidise socially necessary bus services.

We were unable to offer dedicated Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding to all LTAs. However, capacity funding has been provided to those LTAs who were not awarded funding, to support development and delivery of their BSIPs and Enhanced Partnerships. The Department's BSIP Guidance states that we expect LTAs to collaborate on cross-boundary issues.

Daisy Cooper:[\[131380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Levelling Up in the East of England report from the East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing longer-term funding mechanisms for local authorities to support bus services in that region.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport has provided nearly £2 billion in emergency and recovery funding since March 2020 to bus operators and local transport authorities (LTAs) in England outside London to support services and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. The Department for Transport is actively considering its support for the bus sector from April 2023.

In addition to this recovery funding, we provide £42 million annually through the Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) directly to LTAs to subsidise socially necessary bus services. We also provide over £200 million directly to bus operators every year through BSOG to help keep fares down and maintain a larger network than would otherwise be possible.

■ Bus Services: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[131378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Department plans to give detailed feedback to local authorities which were not successful in securing Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding (BSIP); and when the next tranche of BSIP funding will be available.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has provided written feedback to local authorities which were unsuccessful in securing BSIP Funding and has also offered one-to-one surgeries with these authorities to discuss this further.

Following the Autumn Statement, it is clear we all need to work to live within our budgets, and the £1.2billion made available at the 2021 Spending Review is now fully allocated. When future bus funding is announced, the updated Bus Service Improvement Plans may be assessed to ensure they are relevant and that the plans are working as intended.

■ Cross Country Line

Jack Brereton:

[\[131257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to (a) address overcrowding on and (b) improve connectivity of rail services between Manchester and Birmingham via Stoke-on-Trent.

Huw Merriman:

I welcome that passengers are returning to the railway. The CrossCountry franchise runs to October 2023 and a new contract is being developed. This will consider options for affordable opportunities to increase capacity on CrossCountry services in future years.

CrossCountry is working to increase the frequency of services connecting Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent with Birmingham, Bristol and Bournemouth during 2023, and their plans will be made public soon.

■ Cross Country Line: Rolling Stock

Jack Brereton:

[\[131258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to upgrade train rolling stock on Crosscountry services to (a) address overcrowding and poor accessibility and (b) meet 2050 net zero targets.

Huw Merriman:

The rolling stock requirements for the next CrossCountry contract are yet to be decided. Most of its fleet is around 20 years old, far short of the trains' life expectancy, and is all fully accessible. The Department will consider value for money proposals offering an increase in capacity and wider passenger benefits.

CrossCountry is working with the rolling stock owners on options to reduce the carbon footprint of the CrossCountry train fleet.

Jack Brereton: [\[131259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason it is not his policy to replace Crosscountry train rollingstock with bi-mode multiple units for use with overhead electric wires.

Huw Merriman:

Most trains in the CrossCountry fleet are around 20 years old; far from their operating life expectancy. CrossCountry are working with rolling stock owners to reduce the carbon footprint of its train fleet.

Our Transport Decarbonisation Plan commits to delivering a Net Zero rail network by 2050, with sustained carbon reductions in rail along the way. Our ambition is to remove all diesel-only trains from the network by 2040.

■ Cycling: Infrastructure

Rachael Maskell: [\[128683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure cycling infrastructure is accessible to (a) cargo bikes and (b) bikes for disabled people.

Rachael Maskell: [\[128684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to require local authorities to make cycling infrastructure accessible to people needing adaptations to their bicycles.

Jesse Norman:

Provision of cycling infrastructure is the responsibility of local authorities. They are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty, and it is for them to ensure any infrastructure is provided in a way that meets legislation designed to reduce inequalities. Any measures for cycling should be designed to meet the requirements set out in the Department's 'Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design' and in its 'Inclusive Mobility' guidance to ensure cycling schemes are accessible to people with disabilities. This guidance includes advice on designing for different types of cycles, including adapted and cargo cycles. Active Travel England (ATE) has responsibility for reviewing proposed Government-funded active travel schemes and will also inspect finished schemes.

■ Domestic Visits: North of England

Louise Haigh: [\[132510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date he last travelled on official business by train to the north of England.

Jesse Norman:

The Secretary of State for Transport travelled to Manchester by train for official business on 30th November 2022.

■ Driving Instruction: Greater Manchester

Navendu Mishra:

[\[131357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of the 436 additional driving instructors announced have been recruited in Greater Manchester as of 24 January 2023.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) does not employ driving instructors.

Of the 403 driving examiners who have entered testing recently, 24 were in driving test centres in the Greater Manchester area.

■ Driving Licences: Gender

Rachel Maclean:

[\[132588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will update the driving license application process to replace the word gender and the options male and female with the word sex and the options male and female.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) already captures 'sex' with the option for male and female on its new digital service for first provisional driving licence applications. The DVLA is working to ensure consistency in the way such information is captured across all its driving licence application services.

■ Driving Licences: Trinidad and Tobago

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[131230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing citizens of Trinidad and Tobago to swap their home country driving licences for full UK driving licences after 12 months in the UK.

Mr Richard Holden:

Arrangements for the exchange of foreign licences in GB depend on the driver testing and licensing standards in the candidate country being assessed as equivalent to those in GB. A request for the exchange of licences issued in Trinidad and Tobago was not progressed following an assessment in 2007.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency would be happy to consider any further request from Trinidad and Tobago. Agreement to exchange licences is subject to assessment of all current aspects of testing and licensing standards, a public consultation and the necessary legal process.

■ Driving under Influence

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[131122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2022 to Question 111539 on Driving under Influence, if he will clarify (a) what is meant by the phrase no-cost partnership and (b) how that negates a conflict of interest in this instance.

Mr Richard Holden:

In a no-cost marketing partnership, THINK! does not financially sponsor any partner activity. Instead, partners feature our campaign messaging and a 'Supporting THINK!' logo in their content, helping us to reach a wider target audience. This was the case in our partnership with Diageo.

THINK! and the Department for Transport were not financially sponsored by Diageo. We did not receive any complimentary services or products from Diageo through this partnership or provide any such services to Diageo.

■ High Speed 2 Line

Esther McVey:

[\[129833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the Government has not published the HS2 Local Growth Action Plan.

Esther McVey:

[\[129834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he intends to publish the HS2 Local Growth Action Plan; and whether that plan will be extended to include places that will host stations for Phase 2b of HS2 and the infrastructure they will require.

Huw Merriman:

The Government continues to develop the HS2 Local Growth Action Plan. The Department has taken more time to develop the plan and allow for cross-governmental input, and it will be published this year. In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed that the Government remains committed to delivering HS2 to Manchester. The action plan will set out how we will continue to work closely with places that will host stations, including those on the Phase 2b route, to support their local growth ambitions and help to implement lessons learnt across the HS2 programme.

Louise Haigh:

[\[129881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the letter from the Minister of State for Transport to the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, dated 30 December 2022, whether the analysis being undertaken for specific phases of the HS2 programme will (a) include the Transport for the North preferred option, (b) cover the wider economic benefits of each option and (c) assess benefit-cost ratios using the (i) updated PLANET Framework Model v10.1 and (ii) NoRMS 2 model.

Huw Merriman:

The Government's strategy for Northern Powerhouse Rail remains the one described in the Integrated Rail Plan.

The NPR Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) will include a full economic assessment of different NPR network configurations, including the TfN preferred network as set out in statutory advice. The economic analysis will incorporate both transport and wider economic impacts alongside other economic, social and environmental impacts as set out in DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance.

The transport impacts are being assessed using the latest version of TfN's Northern Rail Modelling System (NoRMS). The Planet Framework Model (PfM) is used to assess impacts of HS2 and is not used to estimate transport impacts in the NPR business case, although outputs from PfM are taken as inputs to NoRMS.

■ High Speed 2 Line: East Midlands**Andrew Bridgen:**[\[131177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to link up HS2 to the Midland Mainline through the East Midlands Hub.

Huw Merriman:

The Integrated Rail Plan set out plans for a new high speed line between the West and East Midlands, connecting to an electrified Midland Main Line near East Midlands Parkway (HS2 East). Following the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan, DfT asked HS2 Ltd and Network Rail to work together to develop options on how to take forward HS2 East. This work is ongoing.

■ Levenshulme Station: Access**Afzal Khan:**[\[131377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will visit Levenshulme railway station to meet with users who struggle to access that station.

Huw Merriman:

I am committed to improving accessibility at stations and we will be seeking further funding for the Access for All programme. A nomination has been received for Levenshulme and I hope to announce successful projects later this year.

■ Motor Vehicles: Insurance**Stella Creasy:**[\[132352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, whether it is his policy to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the judgement in *Motor Insurers' Bureau v Lewis* 2019, reference EWCA Civ 909.

Jesse Norman:

The Department is currently reviewing all transport-related Retained EU Law. It will set out its approach to individual pieces of Retained EU Law in due course.

■ Motor Vehicles: Registration**Mohammad Yasin:**[\[129937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing ownership records, alongside registered keeper details on V5C documents in the context of present lack of ownership documentation allowing people to change ownership or keepership of a vehicle without requesting checks.

Mr Richard Holden:

The vehicle register held by the DVLA, is not a register of legal title or ownership of vehicles.

Based on the latest available data, the DVLA is confident that just over 92% of the keepers on record are contactable and traceable based on the information held.

■ Motorcycles: Redbridge**Wes Streeting:**[\[133718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data his Department holds on the number of motorcycle or moped drivers driving on public roads unaccompanied and without a full UK driving licence in (a) Ilford North and (b) the Borough of Redbridge for the period in which the latest figures are available.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department does not hold this information.

■ Motorway Service Areas: Charging Points**Louise Haigh:**[\[131262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the policy paper Government vision for the rapid chargepoint network in England, published on 14 May 2020, what progress his Department has made on the aim of having at least six high-powered charge points at motorway service areas in England by 2023.

Jesse Norman:

There are currently more than 400 open-access rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoints at motorway service areas (MSAs) across England. This includes over 170 ultra-rapid chargepoints, which can deliver around 120-145 miles of range in just 15 minutes for a typical electric vehicle. Some 97% of motorway service areas have rapid or faster charging available.

By the end of 2023, the Government's aim is to have at least six ultra-rapid, open access chargepoints at every MSA in England, with some larger sites having 10 to 12. The Government expects the private sector to deliver this. Setting a target has already encouraged investment across the country, and led to a significant expansion in available charging on the motorway.

■ National Highways: Finance

Conor McGinn:

[\[131235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether National Highways will be provided with additional funding to help (a) enable and (b) prioritise infrastructure to help facilitate freeports.

Mr Richard Holden:

National Highways has been allocated £24 billion to operate, maintain, renew and enhance Englands strategic road network between 2020-2025 as part of RIS2. As part of this funding allocation, National Highways facilitates and supports a range of government policies, including freeports. Consideration of freeport connectivity will also form part of the development of RIS3, beyond 2025.

■ National Highways: ICT

Sarah Champion:

[\[132339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether National Highways is planning any outages of its Dynac system.

Sarah Champion:

[\[132340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is the policy of National Highways to provide advanced notice to motorists of any planned outages of its Dynac system.

Mr Richard Holden:

As with any technology, there is an ongoing need for maintenance and upgrade work. There was planned maintenance overnight on Saturday on 28 January 2023, timed for when traffic levels are at their lightest.

National Highways have well-rehearsed procedures in place for planned outages, including increased patrolling by National Highway's traffic officers, pre-positioned vehicle recovery and active monitoring of CCTV.

■ Railways: Fares

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[129882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to launch an independent review of (a) Transport for London's zoning of Watford Junction railway station, Watford High Street railway station, Bushey railway station and Watford Underground station and (b) of Transport for London's zoning policy.

Mr Richard Holden:

Transport in London is devolved and is the responsibility of the Mayor of London and Transport for London, this includes their zoning policy. The Department has no plans to conduct an independent review of the current zoning for Watford Junction railway station, Watford High Street railway station, Bushey railway station and Watford Underground station.

■ Roads: Accidents

Wendy Morton: [\[128646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) pedestrians and (b) other people were (i) killed and (ii) seriously injured in collisions where the driver of the vehicle left the scene in (A) 2021 and (B) 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

The number of pedestrians and other road users that were killed or seriously injured in reported road collisions that involved at least one of the drivers leaving the scene in 2021 is shown below.

	KILLED	SERIOUSLY INJURED
Pedestrians	49	860
Other casualties	37	1,600

Data for 2022 will be published in September 2023.

■ Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill

Grahame Morris: [\[131210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral answer to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun of 19 January, Official Report column 521, to which (a) railway unions and (b) other stakeholders his Department has written on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

Huw Merriman:

For the introduction of the Bill by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy there was engagement with stakeholders. Following the introduction of the Bill, the Department wrote to stakeholders to update them and explain the Bill and as part of the forthcoming consultation, the railway trade unions, employers and other stakeholders will be consulted.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Death

Dan Carden: [\[R\] \[131313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the extension of the freeze on alcohol duty until August 2023 on levels of alcohol-specific deaths.

James Cartlidge:

For the first time, from 1 August 2023, we will tax all beverages in proportion to their alcoholic strength. This will help address potentially harmful products like 'white' ciders and strong fortified wines, which are often cited by health groups as being

abused. At the same time, we are reducing the tax burden on lower ABV products, encouraging producers to expand their low alcohol offerings and consumers to switch to lower ABV alternatives.

The Government will continue to assess the impact of its decisions on alcohol duties, including the duty freeze until 1 August 2023, and aims to balance its public health objectives with support for businesses.

■ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Finance

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[131107]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has provided funding for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Andrew Griffith:

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with [106 approved and prospective members globally](#). It invests in infrastructure and other productive sectors to foster sustainable economic development, create wealth, and improve infrastructure connectivity in Asia.

Alongside other members, the UK provided an initial financial contribution in return for AIIB shares. More details can be found in the [AIIB Capital Order 2015](#).

In addition, the UK contributed to the AIIB's [Project Preparation Special Fund](#), which provides grant support for the preparation of high-quality projects for AIIB Members, especially less developed Members.

The Government works closely with the AIIB and other shareholders to ensure its investments are in line with international standards and best practice.

■ Business Banking Resolution Service

Peter Dowd:

[132457]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to put in place a provision to deal with unresolved business banking complaints relating to SMEs following the planned closure of the Business Banking Resolution scheme 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 BBRS, which launched on 15 February 2021, offers a free, independent service designed to settle unresolved historical complaints that are not eligible for the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS), and new complaints from SMEs which are too large to be eligible for the FOS. Over 99% of UK businesses can access independent dispute resolution either through the FOS or the BBRS.

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.

Ministers and officials continue to monitor BBRS discussions closely, and we remain focused on ensuring SMEs have access to redress now and in the future.

Peter Dowd:

[\[132458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has had discussions with banks on the provision of a service to deal with unresolved business banking complaints for SMEs 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 BBRS, which launched on 15 February 2021, offers a free, independent service designed to settle unresolved historical complaints that are not eligible for the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS), and new complaints from SMEs which are too large to be eligible for the FOS. Over 99% of UK businesses can access independent dispute resolution either through the FOS or the BBRS.

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Ministers and officials continue to monitor BBRS discussions closely, and we remain focused on ensuring SMEs have access to redress now and in the future.

■ Business: Car Allowances

Priti Patel:

[\[129819\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what consideration he has given to increasing the (a) mileage rate and (b) 10,000 mile threshold of the Mileage Allowance Payments available to businesses; and what assessment he has made of the potential benefit to (i) businesses; (ii) employees; and (iii) the self-employed of increasing mileage allowance payments.

Darren Jones:

[\[130103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has considered the potential merits of increasing the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment from 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles.

James Cartlidge:

Approved Mileage Allowance Payments (AMAPs) are used by employers to reimburse an employee's expenses for business mileage in their private vehicle.

The government sets the AMAP rates to minimise administrative burdens.

Employees can claim up to 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and the 25p per mile for subsequent miles. The mileage thresholds reflect that the AMAP rates are designed to cover both a proportion of fixed costs, such as insurance and VED, as well as ongoing costs such as fuel.

Employers are not required to use the AMAPs rates. Instead, they can agree to reimburse a different amount that better reflects their employees' circumstances. If an employee is paid less than the AMAP rate, they can claim Mileage Allowance Relief (MAR) on the shortfall. However, where payments exceed the relevant AMAP rate, there may be a tax and National Insurance charge on the difference.

Self-employed people can choose to use the simplified mileage rate, or they can claim tax relief using capital allowances and actual expenses.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps the AMAP rate under review and any changes are considered and announced at fiscal events.

■ Financial Services: Regulation

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[131460]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to improve the UK's financial services sector regulatory framework.

Andrew Griffith:

The Chancellor provided a detailed written statement to the House in December 2022 on the government's Edinburgh Reforms to improve the regulatory framework for financial services (HCWS425).

This builds on the Future Regulatory Framework (FRF) Review, which was established by the government to determine how the financial services regulatory framework should adapt to the UK's new position outside of the European Union (EU), and to ensure the framework is fit for the future.

The outcomes of the FRF Review are now being delivered through the Financial Services and Markets Bill, a key piece of legislation that allows us to seize the opportunities of EU Exit and secure the UK's position as a global financial hub.

The Government has also published an ambitious plan to enact the repeal of retained EU law in financial services and build a smarter financial services regulatory framework as part of the Edinburgh Reforms.

Amongst other areas, the document set out that the Government will split areas of regulation into tranches, prioritising those areas including those with the biggest potential to deliver improvements to UK economic growth. The government aims to make significant progress on tranches one and two of the programme by the end of 2023 and will ensure that there are opportunities for the full range of stakeholders to engage and to feed in views as the programme is delivered. More detail can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-a-smarter-financial-services-framework-for-the-uk>

■ Health Services: Devolution

Jim Shannon:

[\[129782\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of inflation on devolved assemblies' budgets for health services.

John Glen:

The devolved administrations are well-funded to deliver all their devolved responsibilities, including health services.

The 2021 Spending Review set the largest annual block grants, in real terms, of any spending review settlement since the devolution Acts. Those settlements are still growing in real terms this year, and over the three-year spending review period, despite inflation being higher than expected.

This provides the devolved administrations with over 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. This is around 25% more for the Scottish Government and around 20% more for the Welsh Government and NI Executive. It is for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their funding in devolved areas.

Like many countries, the UK faces the twin challenge of a recession and high inflation as global energy price rises have been exacerbated by Putin's war in Ukraine. The Government has set out its plan to halve inflation over the course of this year by remaining steadfast in support for the independent Monetary Policy Committee at the Bank of England, making difficult but responsible decisions on tax and spending to not add fuel to the fire, and by tackling high energy prices by holding down energy bills for households and businesses this year and next and investing in long-term energy security.

■ High-risk Wealth Programme

James Murray:

[\[131456\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many cases the High-Risk Wealth Programme has considered in each tax year since its introduction; and if he will publish information on how these cases are selected.

Victoria Atkins:

The High Risk Wealth Programme (HRWP) has considered the following number of cases for inclusion in the programme since its introduction in 2018. A case can include multiple persons and/or entities as well as multiple risks.

Tax Year Cases Considered

2017/18 ≤ 10

2018/19 ≤ 5

2019/20 ≤ 5

2020/21 ≤ 5

2021/22 ≤ 10

Further information about the HRWP can be found here:

[Information about the High-Risk Wealth Programme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-risk-wealth-programme)

■ Members: Correspondence

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[132338\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reply to my email correspondence of 9 November 2022 from a constituent on FairCharge.

Victoria Atkins:

The correspondence from 9 November 2022 has now been answered.

■ Public Expenditure: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[131329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Welsh Government will receive a Barnett consequential from the £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund announced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

John Glen:

The Barnett formula applies to changes in departmental DEL budgets, not when departments make spending or policy announcements. Funding for this programme was allocated as part of the Spending Review in 2021 so the Welsh Government has already received the associated Barnett-based funding as part of its own settlement.

The 2021 Spending Review set the largest annual block grant, in real terms, of any spending review settlement since the devolution Act. This provided £18bn per year for the Welsh Government. This settlement is still growing in real terms this year, and over the three-year spending review period, despite inflation being higher than expected.

The Welsh Government is well-funded to deliver all its devolved responsibilities, receiving around 20% more funding per person than equivalent UK Government spending in other parts of the UK. It is for the Welsh Government to allocate its funding as it sees fit in devolved areas.

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

James Murray:

[\[131454\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many FTE employees have been working in the HMRC Wealthy Team in each tax year since 2010-11.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC's Wealthy team was formed in April 2017. Data on full time equivalent (FTE) employees for the years 2017-2021 has previously been provided under FOI202/030710. For 2021-22 there were 961 Staff equivalent to 887 FTE.

■ Small Businesses: Tax Allowances

Chi Onwurah:

[132400]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations or feedback he has received from (a) small business community, (b) the science community and (c) the investment community on the changes to R&D tax credit announced in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

The Chancellor set out at the Autumn Statement that the Government will work with industry ahead of Spring Budget to understand whether and how to provide further support for R&D intensive small and medium enterprises (SMEs), while also considering fiscal sustainability.

The Government will continue to engage with industry in the coming months and any further changes will be set out in detail in the usual way at the Budget.

The Government has launched a consultation on R&D Tax Relief Reform which closes on 30th March.

■ Taxation

James Murray:

[131455]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what data his Department holds on (a) estimated PAYE and National Insurance contributions tax receipts, (b) estimated receipt of incomes taxes other than PAYE, (c) estimated compliance yield generated from HMRC activities, (d) estimated spend on compliance activities and (e) estimated tax gap in respect of wealthy individuals in each tax year since 2010-11.

Victoria Atkins:

The estimated PAYE and National Insurance contributions tax receipts, estimated receipts from other taxes, estimated compliance yield generated from HMRC activities and estimated spend on compliance activities from 2019-20 to 2021-22 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrCs-annual-report-and-accounts>. This information was compiled from Annual reports and accounts published by HMRC.

Table 1.4 of Measuring tax gaps 2022 edition: tax gap estimates for 2020 to 2021' provides a time series for the estimated tax gap for wealthy individuals and is available on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/measuring-tax-gaps-tables>.

■ Theatre: Tax Allowances

Barbara Keeley:

[132309]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of valid claims for Theatre Tax Relief were paid within 28 days of receipt in the period since 1 April 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC aims to pay claims for all tax reliefs as soon as possible. Since 1 April 2022, 78 per cent of valid claims for Theatre Tax Relief have been paid within 28 days of receipt. This figure fluctuates over the year and reflects the position as of 26 January 2023.

Treasury: Equality**Chris Stephens:****[R]** [\[128661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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.

James Cartlidge:

The Treasury collects and publishes data on protected characteristics in its [annual reports](#) on the public gov.uk website, in accordance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 and GDPR 2018 regulations. Departmental monitoring data is made available to staff in the department as necessary – including union representatives.

Workplace Pensions: Tax Allowances**Anthony Browne:****[131406]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of pension allowances on factors that may incentivise doctors to retire early.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that hard-working NHS staff do not find themselves reducing their work commitments due to the interaction between their pay, their pension, and the relevant tax regime. On 22 September, the Government announced it will change elements of the NHS Pension Scheme to help retain doctors, nurses and other senior NHS staff, to increase capacity. These changes include:

- Changing pension rules regarding inflation
- Encouraging NHS Trusts to explore local solutions for senior clinicians affected by pension tax charges, such as pension recycling
- Implementing permanent retirement flexibilities and extending existing temporary measures to allow our most experienced staff to return to service or stay in service longer.

The Government keeps under review how to ensure pension allowances do not penalise those making provisions for their retirement.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Children: Poverty****Rachael Maskell:**[\[131246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group Child of the North, entitled Child Poverty and the Cost of Living Crisis, published on 24 January; and what steps he is taking to tackle child poverty in areas of deprivation.

Rachael Maskell:[\[131247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on providing support to households to tackle early years child poverty.

Mims Davies:

Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions engage regularly with their Ministerial counterparts in other Departments, taking a collective approach to the policies and interventions that can make a difference.

The Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend over £245bn through the welfare system in 2022/23 including £111bn on people of working age.

In 2023/24, subject to parliamentary approval, we are uprating all benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1%, in order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap levels are also increasing by the same amount.

With 1.16 million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting parents to move into, and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children.

To help people into work, including parents, our Plan for Jobs is providing broad ranging support for all Jobseekers with our Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP), Job Entry Targeted Support and Restart scheme. We are also extending the support Jobcentres provide to people in work and on low incomes. Through a staged roll-out, which started in April 2022, around 2.1 million low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for support to progress into higher-paid work.

The government is also increasing the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour from April 2023, representing an increase of over £1,600 to the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the National living wage, benefitting over 2 million low paid workers.

■ Cost of Living Payments

Dan Carden:

[\[130061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward the payment date for Spring 2023 cost-of-living payments.

Mims Davies:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has made substantial support available to households this winter. The Government's Energy Price Guarantee will save a typical British household around £900 this winter, based on what energy prices would have been under the current price cap - reducing bills by roughly a third. This is in addition to the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, paid over six months starting in October 2022.

This support comes on top of the Cost of Living Payments which have already been made to the most vulnerable households during 2022. DWP, HMRC and MoD successfully delivered 8.4 million £326 means-tested benefit Cost of Living Payments (as of 8th September 2022), 8.3 million £324 means-tested benefit Cost of Living Payments (as of 12th December 2022), 6 million £150 disability benefit Cost of Living Payments (as of 30th September 2022) and 11.6 million pensioner Cost of Living Payments (as of 20th December 2022).

For those who require additional support this winter the current Household Support Fund, running in England from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, is providing £421 million of funding. The devolved administrations have been allocated £79 million through the Barnett formula. As announced at Autumn Statement, the Household Support Fund will continue until March 2024.

The government intends to make the forthcoming Cost of Living payments throughout the financial year 2023/24 as follows:

- £301 – First Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2023
- £150 – Disability Payment – during Summer 2023
- £300 – Second Cost of Living Payment – during Autumn 2023
- £300 – Pensioner Payment – during Winter 2023/4
- £299 – Third Cost of Living Payment – during Spring 2024

■ Cost of Living Payments:: Angus

Dave Doogan:

[\[132624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Angus constituency did not receive the first Cost of Living Payment due to receiving a nil award during the relevant Universal Credit assessment period.

Dave Doogan:

[\[132625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Angus constituency did not receive the second Cost of Living Payment due to receiving a nil award during the relevant Universal Credit assessment period.

Mims Davies:

The Department will publish a full analysis once all payment information for the first and second Cost of Living payments, during the financial year, is available.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Equality**

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[128658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 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.

Mims Davies:

DWP takes its responsibility to comply with Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty and Civil Service Management Code seriously. We have adopted an Equality Analysis approach to embed inclusive decision making and equalities considerations and monitoring within all of our policies and practices.

In DWP Equality Analysis is undertaken at policy/project level, and to ensure compliance we have embedded equalities thinking and monitoring within our change processes and have developed comprehensive guidance to support Senior Responsible Officer's to effectively discharge their responsibilities. In addition, we have dedicated resource in place to provide bespoke support on all aspects of Equality Analysis, including monitoring and evaluation to policy/project leads as requested.

Policy/Projects with an employee impact are actively encouraged to implement Trade Union engagement and the sharing of their Equality Analysis as part of their Stakeholder Management Plans.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: EU Law**

Stella Creasy:

[\[132349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, whether it is his policy to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Allonby judgement, reference C256/01.

Stella Creasy:

[\[132350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, whether it is his policy to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Barber judgement, reference C262/88.

Stella Creasy:

[\[132351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, whether it is his policy to (a) revoke, (b) retain or (c) replace the Barber judgement in *Walker v Innospec*, reference UKSC 47.

Laura Trott:

This Government has repeatedly affirmed its support for new pensions rights being built up equally for men and women, and has clearly indicated that it accepts the judgment of the Supreme Court in *Walker v Innospec*.

We are now considering how best to seamlessly implement the measures in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill whilst minimising the impact on the pension industry and members of occupational pension schemes. We will seek to ensure there is no unnecessary disruption of the effective operation of the private pensions system.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Freedom of Information

David Linden:

[\[131311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason his Department has not updated its web page on Collection: DWP statistical FOI releases since 2017.

Mims Davies:

The Department takes its obligations under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act very seriously. However, it is not a requirement to publish FOI responses.

All FOI requests that are submitted via WhatDoTheyKnow.com, automatically have their responses published on that site.

■ Disability: Government Assistance

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[131285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress his Department has made on the Disability Action Plan.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[131286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans to launch a consultation on the Disability Action Plan.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[131287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) disabled people, (b) organisations representing disabled people and (c) other interested parties contribute to the Disability Action Plan.

Tom Pursglove:

I announced on 1 December 2022 that a new Disability Action Plan will be consulted on, and published in, 2023. The plan will set out the action the Government will take in 2023 and 2024 to improve disabled people's lives.

The Disability Action Plan will set out how we will go further, taking concerted action across government to improve disabled people's lives. Ensuring the voice of disabled people is properly heard is a priority for this Government. We will run a full public consultation and engagement on the plan in 2023. The consultation will be accessible to ensure all disabled people who want to take part, can do so. More information will be announced shortly.

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Tom Hunt: [\[131419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to support people with disabilities into employment.

Tom Pursglove:

A range of Government initiatives are supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, to start, stay and succeed in work. These include:

- Increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people, and people with health conditions, into work;
- The Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- Access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace;
- The Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace; and
- Support in partnership between the DWP and the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies, which combines psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions.

■ Employment: Menopause

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[131213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps his Department has taken to support workers experiencing menopause to stay in employment.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[131214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps his Department has taken to support (a) unemployed and (b) economically inactive women experiencing menopause to find employment.

Mims Davies:

In July 2021, DWP asked members of the 50 PLUS Roundtable on older workers to look at the important issue of menopause and employment given the impact menopause can have on women's working lives, particularly in the latter stages of their careers. An independent '*menopause and the workplace*' report was published later in 2021 and the Government's response was outlined in July 2022.

The Government has again committed, in its response to Recommendation 6 of the Women and Equalities Select Committees report: *Menopause and the Workplace*, that they will appoint a DWP Menopause Employment Champion. The Menopause Employment Champion will work with the Women's Health Ambassador on the issue of menopause and employment and drive forward work with employers on menopause workplace issues and spearhead the proposed collaborative employer-led campaign as outlined in the independent report.

■ Females: Poverty**Steve McCabe:**[\[132289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department will make an assessment of potential trends in levels of poverty among women born in the 1950s in the context of the increases in the cost of living.

Mims Davies:

Changes to State Pension age were made over a series of Acts by successive governments from 1995 onwards, following public consultations and extensive debates in both Houses of Parliament. The current state pension age is 66 for men and women. Since 1994/95, rates of female pensioners in poverty have fallen by a larger amount than for male pensioners over the same period. Reforms to the State Pension have put measures in place to improve State Pension outcomes for most women. Over three million women stand to receive an average of £550 more per year by 2030 because of the recent reforms. Pension Credit provides a safety net for those pensioners who have been unable, for whatever reason, to make provision for their retirement.

All benefit rates and State Pensions will increase in line with the Consumer Prices Index for the year to September 2022. This will mean that, subject to parliamentary approval, they will increase by 10.1% in April. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1% subject to parliamentary approval.

In addition, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. This will be split into three payments of around £300 each across the 2023/24 financial year. A separate £300 payment will be made to over eight million pensioner households on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment. Further to this, the amended Energy Price Guarantee will save the average UK household £500 in 2023/24.

■ Housing Benefit

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[132371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims since Q3 2020-21.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[132372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the increase in the average speed of processing a change of circumstance to an existing housing benefit claim since quarter 4 of 2020-21; and whether his Department is taking steps to reduce the time taken to process a change of circumstance.

Mims Davies:

The DWP Permanent Secretary is the accountable officer for Housing Benefit, however, it is for Local Authorities to decide how best to deliver their Housing Benefit services. It remains the focus of DWP to work collaboratively with Local Authorities in all areas to improve performance. This includes monitoring speed of processing data for new claims and changes of circumstances and engaging with Local Authorities regularly to share good practice and offer advice and support. This includes DWP business consultancy support for Local Authorities in England, Scotland and Wales.

■ Jobcentres: Closures

David Linden: [\[132435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2023 to Question 127881 on Jobcentres: Closures, if he will list the locations and proposed closure dates of the temporary Jobcentres that his Department has already made a decision to close.

Mims Davies:

Further to question [127881](#) answered in the House of Commons on 24 January 2023, the Department can confirm that it continues to review its Jobcentre estate with a view to start returning to its pre-pandemic size.

Once the Department is ready to provide more information on proposed closure locations, and dates, it will share the news with staff first and I can assure the House that all MPs will be contacted when a decision has been made on any sites that may impact on their constituents.

A full list of the temporary sites can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Pension Wise

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[132377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department is taking steps to increase the uptake of Pension Wise appointments.

Laura Trott:

The Government has taken steps to increase take up of Pension Wise guidance. The Stronger Nudge to Pensions Guidance regulations were introduced in June 2022. This places a duty on pension schemes to ensure that any savers accessing their Defined Contribution savings have either received Pension Wise guidance or made an active and clearly expressed decision to opt out of guidance. As part of this, schemes are required to offer to book an appointment on the saver's behalf, at a time and date suitable for the saver. The Stronger Nudge aims to increase take-up of Pension Wise guidance by presenting it as a normal part of the access journey.

Personal Income**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[131212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on which date his Department will publish the Households Below Average Income statistical release for financial years ending 1995 to 2022.

Mims Davies:

The households below average income statistics, for financial years ending 1995 to 2022, will be [published in March 2023](#). The exact release date will be published four weeks prior to the date of publication.

Personal Independence Payment**Beth Winter:**[\[133807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of her Department's policy to suspend Personal Independence Payments when claimants are hospitalised for more than 28 days on the likelihood of recipients seeking medical care.

Tom Pursglove:

Where an adult aged 18 or over is maintained free of charge, while undergoing medical or other treatment as an in-patient in a hospital or similar institution funded by the NHS, payment of (but not entitlement to) Personal Independence Payment (PIP) ceases after 28 days. This is on the basis that the NHS is responsible for not only the person's medical care, but also the entirety of their disability-related extra costs and, to pay PIP in addition, would be a duplication of public funds intended for the same purpose. Once someone is discharged from hospital, payment of PIP recommences from the date of discharge.

We have no evidence that the policy may affect an individual's decisions to seek medical care.

■ Personal Independence Payment and Work Capability Assessments

Vicky Foxcroft:

[131273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress his Department has made on awarding new contracts to carry out work capability assessments and Personal Independence Payment assessments from August 2023.

Tom Pursglove:

Procurement of the new Functional Assessment Service contracts is well underway, with the expectation that contracts will be signed shortly. Following a transition period, the new service will begin from March 2024. This is part of the Health Transformation Programme's broader work to modernise health and disability benefit services. The new contracts will bring together current Health and Disability Assessment Services and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments under single geographic contracts. These will form a building block for a new integrated Health Assessment Service, which is being developed through the programme.

■ Social Security Benefits

Rachael Maskell:

[131251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that households entitled to social security benefits are claiming all they are entitled to.

Guy Opperman:

[GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) provides information on eligibility and how to make a claim for benefits, including signposting to telephony routes (including textphone and Relay UK) for people who are unable to complete forms online. There are videos on the DWP YouTube channel that provide further information on a range of benefits including Personal Independence Payment, Universal Credit, Winter Fuel Payment, Pension Credit and DLA for Children and these explain how to claim and what to expect once a claim has been made.

Guidance on [GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) includes information on benefits people may be able to claim and other financial support. This includes housing support, help with council tax and direct payments for social care. Where appropriate DWP letters include signposting to additional help and support

We have produced 39 easy read guides, over 90 British Sign Language videos and are ensuring benefit claim forms are accessible to all, covering a variety of DWP benefits and services. These provide disabled people with information on benefit type, who can apply, how to make a claim and assist with making a claim.

Operational staff also have access to a database of known support called a District Provision Tool. It covers national and local information. This contains support for customers such as housing, debt, domestic abuse, modern slavery and other complex needs alongside specific organisations that support people with disabilities

or specific health conditions. This tool is used to facilitate signposting discussions with customers so they can access tailored support where required.

Anyone who requires support to make a new claim to Universal Credit - whether they are claiming benefits for the first time, have had a change of circumstance on legacy benefits which has initiated a move to Universal Credit, or have chosen voluntarily to move to Universal Credit - will be able to access the Help to Claim support, funded by DWP and provided by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland.

■ Universal Credit

Jonathan Ashworth:

[131216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including within the monthly published Universal Credit statistics the number of people on Universal Credit with Limited capability for work and/or Limited capability for work-related activity.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to include this information in the monthly published Universal Credit statistics. Development plans for Universal Credit statistics are published in the [DWP statistical work programme](#).

Judith Cummins:

[131288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of permitting Universal Credit claimants to receive their payments every two weeks rather than every month during increases in the cost of living.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Universal Credit: Angus

Dave Doogan:

[132623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Universal Credit claimants in Angus constituency are paid by their employers on a non-monthly cycle.

Guy Opperman:

The requested information is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Women against State Pension Inequality

Steve McCabe:

[132288]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he or a Minister in his Department next plans to meet with a representative from the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign.

Laura Trott:

We have no current plans to meet with WASPI representatives whilst the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation is ongoing. Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

The Department is cooperating with the Ombudsman in their investigation.

■ Workplace Pensions**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[131215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his Department's Automatic enrolment review 2017, what his Department's timeline is for publishing proposals to extend automatic enrolment in workplace pensions.

Laura Trott:

We remain committed to the implementation of the 2017 Review ambitions in the mid-2020s.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[132376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) defined benefit and (b) defined contribution pension schemes to invest in illiquid assets.

Laura Trott:

DB schemes already can - and do - invest in illiquid assets. Illiquid investments make up around 10% of DB scheme assets.

For DC schemes, regulatory changes planned for this spring will allow performance-based fees to be removed from the scope of the DC pension charge cap. This will make it easier for trustees to access a broader range of illiquid assets that could benefit savers. We confirmed our intention to introduce this reform in our response to the 'broadening the investment opportunities of defined contribution schemes' consultation published on 30 January, along with supporting statutory guidance to help trustees with their decision making regarding performance fees.

Trustees in DB and DC have a fiduciary duty to make investments that are in the best interest of scheme members and need to ensure pension schemes have sufficient liquidity to pay pensions and other benefits under the scheme as they fall due.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Slavery

Jess Phillips:

[131309]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much the Home Office spent on employing caseworkers to make conclusive grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism in financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, (c) 2021-22 and (d) 2022-23 to date.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 30 January 2023. The correct answer should have been:

Miss Sarah Dines

Robert Jenrick:

The Single Competent Authority (SCA) and the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA) are currently recruiting a large number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and reduce decision making timescales. ; this brings additional resource pressures initially (for training and upskilling) but will have substantial long term benefits for decision making timescales.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) does not publish payments made to victims of modern slavery and this does not currently form part of the published NRM statistics.

All victims who consent to receiving support will receive this via the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) in England and Wales which is delivered by The Salvation Army. Details of the MSVC Contract can be found in a redacted version of the contract requirements here: [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

All victims who consented to support under the previous Victim Care Contract ~~were~~ **also are** eligible for financial support under the same policy and a redacted version of the previous contract requirements can be found here (<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/e03ceb15-27ad-4bad-b8ae-43dbc1e9481e>).

As of September 2019, following a CG decision, financial support needs for those in support are considered in a Recovery Needs Assessment (RNA) as part of a holistic assessment of recovery need, as per the published RNA policy.”

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ Update on Home Office business

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):

[[HCWS532](#)]

Today I wish to notify Parliament of a recent Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) judgment regarding compliance issues identified within a specific MI5 technology environment, and outline the handling of those issues once identified by MI5 and the Home Office.

The IPT judgment in this case has found that MI5 unlawfully held data within the relevant Technology Environment between late 2014 and April 2019, and that the relevant Home Secretaries acted unlawfully for the period from December 2016 to April 2019, by approving warrants concerning material held in the Technology Environment in which applicable statutory requirements had not been complied with and failing to make adequate enquiries of MI5, despite being presented with compliance risks. During the proceedings, MI5 and the Home Office conceded a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (regarding privacy rights) and, consequently, of the Human Rights Act 1998. Further to this, the Tribunal has noted that it was not the case that MI5 should never have held the material at all, only that some small part of it had been retained for too long, and that the material had been used for valuable national security purposes.

When the scale of the issue became clear in 2019 the then Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, established an independent review conducted by Sir Martin Donnelly. His Compliance Improvement Review identified three areas where improvements could be made. These were: improvements to support an effective compliance culture across MI5; improvements to ensure more effective sharing of information between MI5 and the Home Office to identify emerging issues; and improvements to ensure increased legal input to the MI5 Management Board and ensuring closer joint working between MI5 and Home Office Legal Advisors. The review made a total of 14 recommendations to address these issues. The then Home Secretary and DG MI5 agreed with the review's conclusions and immediately began a programme of work to address them.

In 2021 Mary Calam independently verified the implementation of Sir Martin's recommendations. She concluded that "a huge amount of work has been done through the [compliance improvement] programme and the remediation work. Not all Sir Martin's recommendations have yet been fully implemented, but significant, measurable progress is evident. MI5 have used the [Compliance Improvement] Review to make fundamental changes across the whole organisation and develop a new legal compliance operating model intended to cope with future changes in technology and data."

Today, all 14 of these recommendations have been addressed and MI5 continue to work on further improving their legal compliance. DG MI5 and I discuss this every quarter at

the Ministerial Assurance Group, the setting up of which was one of Sir Martin's recommendations, and my officials maintain close contact with their MI5 counterparts in respect of legal compliance.

While the judgment is clear that there has been unlawfulness by MI5 and former Home Secretaries in the past, this relates to the period between late 2014 – and April 2019 and December 2016 – April 2019 respectively. There have been two programmes of work undertaken within MI5 focused on legal compliance, the introduction of further governance structures to ensure a more open and robust relationship between MI5 and the Home Office, and changes to IPCO's inspection regime since the compliance issue came to light. The effort to address the compliance issues has been consistent and sustained since 2019.

I am aware the judgment has found that former Home Secretaries unlawfully approved warrants between December 2016 –and April 2019 and I know this will trouble members of the House. However, all data obtained was in good faith and it was considered necessary and proportionate for the purposes of national security and the department took swift action in conjunction with MI5 in 2019 once the issues were identified.

I would also like to reassure you that while this case has outlined widespread corporate failings between the Home Office and MI5, these issues are historic and the Home Office taken steps internally to increase collaboration with MI5 and ensure there is appropriate resourcing in place within the relevant Home Office teams responsible for investigatory Powers.

I also wish to be clear that there has been no finding by the Tribunal that MI5 misused the data in question, nor any suggestion of this at any time during this process. As the former Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, noted in 2019, none of the risks identified relate in any way to the conduct and integrity of the staff of MI5.

Finally, I would like to reference the endorsement the Tribunal has provided on the robustness of the oversight regime and safeguards contained within the Investigatory Powers Act, including the adequacy of the measures available to the Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

MI5 carries out a challenging mission to protect national security and they have made significant progress in respect of legal compliance since the issues were identified by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner in 2019. Its officers work on extremely complex and often fast paced issues to keep this country safe and I am grateful for their continued dedication and professionalism.

I would like to reaffirm to Parliament that they have my full support and I am committed to continuing to drive forward change in this area to ensure the use of investigatory powers by all relevant agencies is as compliant as possible.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Building Safety Update**

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS531\]](#)

It is a basic requirement of a modern society that people should feel safe in their own homes. For too many people this has not been the case. It is not the responsibility of government alone to keep watch and to ensure that homes are fit for habitation, and that people can sleep safely; it is the responsibility of the industry that builds them, too. For too long, we know, that responsibility was not upheld by all in the way that it should have been; too many people have suffered and continue to suffer as a result.

One year ago, we set about righting those wrongs with what should have been a statement of the obvious: the moral duty to pay the cost of replacing unsafe cladding belongs not just to government but to those developers, product manufacturers and building owners that put unsafe materials on people's homes and continue to profit from them – and not the innocent residents living inside them.

One year on, the laws passed by this Parliament and the actions taken by this government have systematically broken impasses that were considered intractable.

Leaseholders have been given legal protections from unfair remediation bills for the first time, thanks to the Building Safety Act.

Leaseholders can sell affected properties and move on with their lives, or know that they have the freedom to do so when they choose: earlier this month Colleagues across the House joined me in welcoming the statement from the six major mortgage lenders confirming that they would once again consider mortgage applications on properties that are covered by the leaseholder protections in the Building Safety Act, or where the building is eligible for a government or developer remediation scheme.

The Building Safety Act created new powers to compel the owners of unsafe buildings to ensure properties are fixed, and to require those who are responsible for their defects to pay for their errors and corner-cutting. These powers are available not only to ministers, but to fire services, councils, and most importantly to leaseholders. The Government is continuing to work closely with fire services and councils to ensure that building owners are being held to account for their actions, and that, where required, enforcement action is being taken against them. Developers and building owners responsible for unsafe buildings should be under no doubt: there will be significant consequences if they fail to comply with their legal obligations.

The developer contract

In April last year, I announced that the largest housebuilders had signed a non-binding pledge outlining their intention to fix all life-critical fire-safety issues in buildings over 11 metres which they had a role in developing or refurbishing in England. I welcomed their constructive engagement, as I do again now.

I am today publishing the contract that will legally commit developers to delivering on their word; a commitment worth more than £2 billion that will protect leaseholders in hundreds of buildings. Developers will also be required to reimburse the taxpayer where public money has already been used to make their buildings safe. While there is much more to do, today is a major step towards putting leaseholders' minds at rest.

Once the contract is signed by these developers, leaseholders and owners in affected buildings will benefit from a common framework of rights and responsibilities that will get buildings fixed without cost to leaseholders. The contract confirms that the developers will inform residents in affected buildings how they will be meeting these commitments. I am grateful to those developers who have got on with assessing and remediating their buildings without waiting for the contract.

I expect developers to sign the contract within the next six weeks, by 13 March. This includes every company that signed the pledge, as well as several companies that have regrettably not done so. If you built unsafe buildings over 11 metres but did not sign the pledge, I am putting you on notice: expect to be asked to step up in the near future. Now is the time to make a binding commitment. In signing this contract, developers will be taking a big step towards restoring confidence in the sector and providing much needed certainty to all concerned. They will confirm that they are responsible companies. I know, from the positive discussions I have had, that many will be keen to do so. This contract will allow those developers to plan for the future in the knowledge that they understand the full extent of their legal obligations.

The Responsible Actors Scheme

Using powers provided in the Building Safety Act, I will lay regulations this Spring to create a Responsible Actors Scheme, and make sure that eligible developers that do not sign up are prohibited from carrying out major development, and from receiving building control sign-off for buildings already under construction.

The regulations will set out eligibility criteria for the Scheme and will require members of the Scheme to enter into and comply with the terms of the developer remediation contract we published today.

Major developers who have built defective buildings need to sign the contract and comply with its terms. This is not up for debate. Any eligible developers who refuse to sign the contract and join the statutory scheme will be subject to the prohibitions.

I am looking at expanding the Scheme in due course. I want to capture all those who built unsafe buildings over 11m and should be paying to fix them. If that is you, you should expect to be invited to step up and join the Scheme in the near future.

Holding wrongdoers to account

My department's Recovery Strategy Unit (RSU) has spearheaded legal action against recalcitrant freeholders and is actively investigating the concerning conduct of various companies across the built environment, including contractors and construction product manufacturers.

To those freeholders holding back work to make buildings safe, even where the government has made sufficient money directly available through its Building Safety Fund: you must fix your buildings or we will take action, including through the courts. This legal action has already started, and leaseholders have already secured the first successful Remediation Contribution Order. I would encourage others to use these new powers to challenge bad behaviour.

I have heard with great concern from residents and leaseholders about the actions of some property funds who are delaying vital remediation work. My message to them is clear: if you cannot fulfil your responsibilities and make these buildings safe, you should sell them to someone who will. We are also backing councils to boost their enforcement action against freeholders unacceptably delaying works to make their buildings safe with more than £8 million committed to support local authorities in the areas most affected by building safety issues.

Building Insurance

At my request, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) reviewed the buildings insurance market for multi-occupancy residential buildings. Their report highlighted serious issues relating to commissions and other payments being shared with property managing agents, landlords and freeholders by insurance firms, with such payments making up at least 30% of leaseholders' insurance premiums on average. The FCA also identified concerning obstacles faced by some leaseholders in trying to understand or challenge their insurance bills. This is not acceptable, and we must act.

I can confirm today that I will take action to ban the unacceptable practice of managing agents, landlords and freeholders receiving commissions and other payments from insurers and insurance brokers. I will replace these payments with more transparent fees and over the coming year I will press insurance brokers, managing agents and freeholders to change their practices as a matter of priority. I will also arm leaseholders with more information, enabling them to better scrutinise costs. I will also ensure leaseholders are not subject to unjustified legal costs and can claim their legal costs back from their landlord. These steps will ensure that leaseholder insurance costs are fairer and more transparent and will rebalance the legal costs regime to give leaseholders greater confidence to challenge their costs.

I am pleased to see that the FCA have committed to investigating broker practices and consulting on regulatory changes to further protect and empower leaseholders. While this is a positive first step, leaseholders require meaningful change to ensure that they are better protected in the future. Leaseholders also need insurance premiums to reduce significantly and urgently, but it is clear that the quality of data in the insurance sector must improve to make this possible. I expect the FCA to ensure that industry implements its new data collection code for fire safety, to report on what actions it will take to ensure a fairer and more competitive market by the summer and to continue monitoring this sector.

I also welcome continuing work by the insurance industry on launching a UK-wide scheme to reduce the most severe premiums for leaseholders in buildings with significant fire safety issues, but I must stress the urgency: leaseholders need this support now.

Transforming the built environment

We are creating a culture of high standards that will transform the sector and ultimately the built environment, working closely with those who do that building. Together we will put standards and safety first, and must recognise that when these interests of those who live in homes and those who build them are aligned, everyone will benefit in the long run. The government will play its part in that not only through clear regulation, but also through leadership that holds wrongdoers to account.

The new Building Safety Regulator will oversee this culture of standards. The Government will be taking forward an ambitious programme of secondary legislation over the next year to set the Regulator on firm foundations. Building owners and managers should already be preparing for the first requirement due to come into force soon – the requirement to register higher-risk buildings with the Regulator. I will be working closely with the Regulator to ensure that we have the world-leading regime that residents and leaseholders deserve, and I look forward to approving their first Strategic Plan in the coming months.

A copy of the contract will be deposited in the library of each House and is available on GOV.UK.

TRANSPORT

■ **CAA Annual Progress Report**

Minister of State (Jesse Norman):

[\[HCWS528\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) has made the following Ministerial Statement on Monday 30th January 2023.

The Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS) refresh, published on 23 January 2023, sets out, through nine elements, the ways and means of modernising airspace, focussing on the period until the end of 2040.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) must report to the Secretary of State annually on the delivery of the AMS, through an annual Progress Report. This report details the progress made by industry, as well as work the CAA have conducted against each of the AMS's elements. For 2022, the Progress Report reports on the previous AMS's 15 initiatives.

In total, six of the 15 initiatives are assessed as 'requiring attention', two are on track, one has been implemented and six initiatives have been assessed as having 'major issues'.

The Department continues to work with the CAA to ensure greater progress is made in implementing the airspace modernisation programme. Ministers are giving the programme the urgent attention it requires and are committed to delivery of the AMS.

Areas of Progress

Free Route Airspace (Initiative 2) was implemented in Scotland in 2021 and remains on track for deployment in Q1 2023 across southwest England and Wales. This will see airlines being able to fly more direct routes in upper airspace reducing aviation's carbon emissions and will save CO2 every year equivalent to the power used by some 3,500 family homes (12,000 tonnes CO2/year).

The Airspace Classification Review (Initiative 10) has made significant progress with the publication of the findings into the review of the Cotswold Region. This work has identified where airspace can be opened up for all airspace users to use (e.g., general aviation).

Under the Deployment of Electronic Surveillance Solution (Initiative 11), DfT and the CAA established the Surveillance Standards Task Force, developing national, voluntary specifications for Electronic Conspicuity. This is a key enabler in the refreshed AMS, bringing together current and new airspace users, such as drones, in order to promote a safe and integrated lower airspace.

Areas assessed as having major issues

There are a number of initiatives assessed as having 'major issues, in part because of COVID recovery and the complexities of the airspace changes in the London cluster. However, formal acceptance of the Airspace Change Organising Group's (ACOG) Masterplan Iteration 2 in January 2022 was a critical milestone. This was enabled in part to £9.2m funding by Government. Iteration 3 will be published later this year following a number of public engagement exercises.

Of the six initiatives requiring attention, timescales and delivery plans have been re-assessed and re-baselined as a result of publication of the refreshed AMS.

■ DfT Maritime and Coastguard Agency Annual Report & Accounts for 2021-2

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Richard Holden):
[\[HCWS529\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) has made the following Ministerial Statement on Monday 30th January 2023.

I am proud to announce the publication of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) Annual Report & Accounts for 2021-22. The MCA does vital work to save lives at sea, regulate ship standards and protect the marine environment. The Agency has been playing its part in encouraging and enabling the industry to move towards zero carbon emissions from shipping and to prepare the way to regulate the safety of autonomous shipping.

The Annual Report and Accounts consists of:

1. Performance Report – How the MCA performed against its key performance indicators, and highlighting success;

2. Accountability Report – Including the Corporate Governance Statement and the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the House of Commons; and
3. Financial Statements – Statement of Financial Position and notes to the Agency's Accounts.

During January 2022, the MCA celebrated 200 years of HM Coastguard undertaking crucial rescue activities. The last reporting year saw the Coastguard respond to more than 36,000 incidents around the coast, an increase of around 2,500 from the previous year. There was a significant rise in cases of illegal migrants crossing The Channel in unseaworthy small boats. The Coastguard continues to work closely with the French Coastguard to respond to these incidents. On 13 December 2022, the Government also set out its plans to tackle illegal migration and criminal gangs who exploit our system.

MCA continued to raise the profile of the UK Ship Register during the last reporting year, with the launch of the Concierge Service. MCA also played a major role in supporting the decarbonisation of shipping.

The UK Maritime Administration was subject to an audit of the IMO Implementations Code during 2021-22. This audit resulted in one of the best reports the International Maritime Organization has ever issued, validating our work to be a world leading organisation.

The MCA have let the UK's Second-Generation Search and Rescue Aviation programme. This will take account of how demands on aviation services and technology have evolved and will create a new service for the next 10 years.

The Annual Report and Accounts will be available on GOV.UK and copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Changes to Universal Credit Administrative Earnings Threshold Level

Minister of State for Employment (Guy Opperman):

[\[HCWS530\]](#)

The Government laid regulations to amend Regulation 99 (6) of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013 to raise the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) level to £617 for individual claimants and £988 for couples in Great Britain from 30 January 2023. This builds on the Administrative Earnings increase which took place on 26th September 2022.

The new AET levels are equivalent to an individual working 15 hours per week at the National Living Wage or claimants in a couple working a total of 24 hours per week at the National Living Wage.

Increasing the threshold will bring an estimated 120,000 claimants into the Intensive Work Search regime from the Light Touch regime. This change will allow our Work Coaches to support those claimants with very low incomes to access opportunities to

increase their earnings. This could include developing their skills, progressing in their current role, or by changing their job.

The change in the AET level will complement the new In Work Progression offer that is being rolled out to all Jobcentres throughout 2023. Through this new offer, more people who are in work and on low incomes will be able to access Work Coach support to increase their earnings and move into better quality jobs.

Corresponding legislation for Northern Ireland was laid in parallel to this instrument.

We will communicate the rise in the AET to claimants through national press coverage. In addition, claimants impacted by the rise in the Administrative Earnings Threshold level will be contacted by the Department for Work and Pensions through their Universal Credit journal. Our Work Coaches will then review and agree new Claimant Commitments, providing support and setting appropriate requirements to help claimants access opportunities to increase their earnings.