



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:45 P.M., 22 March 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS**ATTORNEY GENERAL****■ Crown Prosecution Service: North West**

Emily Thornberry: [\[163738\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the Wales CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2020, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163739\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the East Midlands CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163740\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the East of England CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163741\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the (i) London North and (ii) London South CPS areas on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163742\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the Mersey-Cheshire CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163743\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the North West CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163744\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the South East CPS area on 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[163745\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the South West CPS area as of 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[163746\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the Thames and Chiltern CPS area as of 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[163747\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the Wessex CPS area as of 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

The responses to parliamentary questions 163738-163750 have been grouped. The data provided includes all staff grades full time equivalent posts and has been extracted from the CPS Oracle HR database. It is accurate at point of enquiry on 20 March 2023. Consequent changes to data input may mean that this data will change at some point in the future. Data is unavailable for 2010 and 2012 as we do not retain detailed data such as business unit specific information for more than 6 years. Due to the size of the data available, it is presented on a separate document.

Attachments:

1. [Data Response](#) [PQ 163738-163750.docx.xlsx]

■ **Crown Prosecution Service: Staff**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[163750\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the (i) CPS Direct division and (ii) Central Casework Divisions as of 31 December 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

The responses to parliamentary questions 163738-163750 have been grouped. The data provided includes all staff grades full time equivalent posts and has been extracted from the CPS Oracle HR database. It is accurate at point of enquiry on 20 March 2023. Consequent changes to data input may mean that this data will change at some point in the future. Data is unavailable for 2010 and 2012 as we do not retain detailed data such as business unit specific information for more than 6 years. Due to the size of the data available, it is presented on a separate document.

Attachments:

1. [Data Response](#) [PQ 163738-163750.docx.xlsx]

■ Crown Prosecution Service: West Midlands

Emily Thornberry:

[\[163748\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the West Midlands CPS area as of 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

The responses to parliamentary questions 163738-163750 have been grouped. The data provided includes all staff grades full time equivalent posts and has been extracted from the CPS Oracle HR database. It is accurate at point of enquiry on 20 March 2023. Consequent changes to data input may mean that this data will change at some point in the future. Data is unavailable for 2010 and 2012 as we do not retain detailed data such as business unit specific information for more than 6 years. Due to the size of the data available, it is presented on a separate document.

Attachments:

1. [Data Response](#) [PQ 163738-163750.docx.xlsx]

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Yorkshire and the Humber

Emily Thornberry:

[\[163749\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) prosecutors and (b) other staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in the Yorkshire and Humberside CPS area as of 31 December (i) 2010, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) 2021 and (vi) 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

The responses to parliamentary questions 163738-163750 have been grouped. The data provided includes all staff grades full time equivalent posts and has been extracted from the CPS Oracle HR database. It is accurate at point of enquiry on 20 March 2023. Consequent changes to data input may mean that this data will change at some point in the future. Data is unavailable for 2010 and 2012 as we do not retain detailed data such as business unit specific information for more than 6 years. Due to the size of the data available, it is presented on a separate document.

Attachments:

1. [Data Response](#) [PQ 163738-163750.docx.xlsx]

BUSINESS AND TRADE■ **Business**

Bill Esterson: [\[161276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan announced on 1 February 2023, what discussions she has had with EU officials on the potential impact of that Plan on UK businesses; and whether the Government plans to bring forward specific policy proposals in response to that Plan.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The Government is committed to working with its closest partners, including the EU, to understand their green industrial plans as they develop. We, the EU, and its member States face the same global challenges to our industries, while remaining committed to driving the Net Zero transition forward. We will work closely with the EU in the context of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to ensure that UK businesses are not unduly affected by the Green Deal Industrial Plan.

■ **Insolvency**

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[165346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what information her Department holds on how many people have accessed a personal insolvency solution while the Insolvency Service has been conducting its Review of the personal insolvency framework.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The number of people entering a formal personal insolvency solution since the commencement of the personal insolvency review at the beginning of July 2022 until 28 February 2023 was 74,124.

The Insolvency Service publishes official statistics each month on the number of people entering a personal insolvency solution. The latest insolvency statistics can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monthly-insolvency-statistics-february-2023>.

■ **Insolvency: Companies**

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[165345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when the Government plans to publish its response to the consultation entitled Call for evidence: reviewing the personal insolvency landscape.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The call for evidence on the review of the personal insolvency closed on 23 October 2022. The Government is currently analysing the significant number of responses and feedback received and will publish its response in due course.

■ **Multinational Companies: Environmental Protection and Human Rights**

Dan Carden:

[\[165501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on mandatory human rights and environmental standards for multinational companies in the UK.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government supports the current voluntary approach to human rights and environmental standards for multinational companies in the UK; as set out in international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises. Whilst the Government keeps this approach under review, including discussions with business where requested, we currently have no plans to bring forward legislative proposals to make changes to the current system.

■ **Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[167051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what progress her Department has made on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform independent report published 16 June 2021.

Theresa Villiers:

[\[167052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, on implementing the recommendations set out by the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform in its independent report, published on 16 June 2021.

Kevin Hollinrake:

I can confirm that my Department will be leading on implementing the recommendations of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform report following the recent Machinery of Government change. Working with my colleagues, particularly the Chancellor, we have already delivered on key recommendations - such as offshore energy network coordination, costs and charges reports in the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II (MiFID II) and clinical trials approval. I will continue working with Cabinet colleagues on the delivery of the remaining recommendations. This will include building on the announcements made in the Spring Budget.

■ Tickets: Sales**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[166159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when his Department plans to respond to the report by the Competition and Markets Authority entitled Secondary ticketing websites, published on 16 August 2021.

Kevin Hollinrake:

My department, working closely with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, is considering the CMA's report and we will issue a government response shortly.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Civil Servants: Recruitment****Chi Onwurah:** [\[165338\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 17 of the UK Science and Technology Framework, published on 6 March 2023, what steps the Government plans to take to meet the target of increasing the proportion of STEM graduates in the Fast Stream to 50 per cent.

Jeremy Quin:

The Civil Service is committed to delivering the Prime Minister's priorities, and recognises the need to build a strong internal STEM capability. To help build this capability, we are targeting an increase in the proportion of Fast Stream hires with a STEM subject degree qualification to 50%. To meet this target we have:

- Developed a STEM-specific attraction strategy, in partnership with the Science and Engineering Profession, leveraging the Fast Stream brand to target a STEM audience.
- Introduced a new Generalist-STEM recruitment option for the 2023 Fast Stream Campaign; which will enable us to attract and fairly select more graduates with STEM degree backgrounds to join the Fast Stream across a diverse range of roles in different government professions including Corporate Services, Operational Delivery, and Policy.
- Used the Fast Stream target university list, to identify institutions that have a high representation of students with a STEM background.
- Introduced a summer internship offer, with a specific focus on STEM graduates to act as a feeder for Fast Stream recruitment.
- Re-introduced numerical reasoning tests within the Fast Stream selection process.

■ Committee of Privileges

Fleur Anderson:

[\[168100\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason the Government decided to publish Lord Pannick KC's legal opinion on the Privileges Committee investigation into the Rt Hon Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Hon. Lady to my response of 20 March, PQ 166245, to her colleague, the Rt Hon Lady, the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

■ G20 and G7: Public Appointments

Darren Jones:

[\[168113\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Prime Minister has appointed a G7/G20 Sherpa for 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

The Prime Minister has appointed the National Security Adviser, Sir Tim Barrow, as the UK's G7 and G20 Sherpa.

■ Government Departments: Travel

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[163989\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government has spent on helicopter travel in each of the last ten years.

Alex Burghart:

The requested information is not centrally held, and complying with this request would incur a disproportionate cost to the department. Comprehensive details of Senior Officials' Business Expenses, encompassing domestic flights are available on GOV.UK.

■ Ministers: Travel

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[163990\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many private flights have been taken by Government Ministers and officials from RAF Northolt in each of the last ten years.

Alex Burghart:

The requested information is not centrally held, and complying with this request would incur a disproportionate cost to the department. Comprehensive details of Senior Officials' Business Expenses, encompassing domestic flights are available on GOV.UK.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press Inquiry**

Hywel Williams: [\[168027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of re-establishing the Leveson Part Two inquiry.

Julia Lopez:

In 2017, the Government ran a consultation on whether to continue with Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry. Having taken into account all of the views and evidence, we announced in 2018 that we would not be taking forward Part 2 of the Leveson Inquiry.

The Leveson Inquiry and subsequent police investigations were comprehensive with more than 300 people giving evidence to the Inquiry and over 40 people convicted during the three major investigations. Reopening the Inquiry would cost millions and we believe it is no longer appropriate, proportionate, or in the public interest to do so. There have been extensive reforms to policing practices, as well as significant changes to press self-regulation.

■ Entertainers: USA

Kevin Brennan: [\[167044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in the United States on that Government's proposals to increase the cost of visas for touring performers.

Julia Lopez:

Whilst US immigration policy is ultimately a matter for the US authorities, the UK Government has engaged with the US authorities on this matter to make clear the concerns that the UK music industry has about the proposed increase in US visa costs.

We are continuing to engage our counterparts in the US on this matter at official and Ministerial level. Most recently, I raised this issue with the US Embassy on 16 March to make clear the concerns that the UK music industry has about the proposed increase in US visa costs. We will continue to engage the US authorities on this matter.

■ Independent Press Standards Organisation

Hywel Williams: [\[168026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Independent Press Standards Organisation in investigating allegations of illegality and wrongdoing.

Hywel Williams: [\[168028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of whether the Independent Press Standards Organisation has met the

recommendations set out in the independent report entitled Leveson Inquiry: Report into the culture, practices and ethics of the press, published on 29 November 2012.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is committed to independent self-regulation of the press, and does not intervene in or oversee the work of the press regulators. Sir Joseph Pilling's 2016 review found IPSO has made some important achievements in demonstrating it is an independent and effective regulator, and it has made further progress since then.

■ **Tourism: Greater Manchester**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[163987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to support development of the tourism sector in Greater Manchester.

Julia Lopez:

As set out in the Tourism Recovery Plan, the UK Government wants to see a growing, dynamic, and sustainable tourism sector reaching its full potential and driving growth in every nation and region of the UK.

Manchester is a 'gateway city' that disproportionately relies on inbound visitors. This has been done through promoting consumer confidence and marketing activity led by VisitBritain and VisitEngland.

VisitBritain recently [launched](#) their GREAT-funded £9.8m international campaign in which Manchester is featured throughout both campaigns.

In January 2023, VisitBritain organised a series of educational trips for international travel trade buyers across Britain in which a delegation from the US visited Greater Manchester.

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces: Families**

Sir Julian Lewis:

[\[167989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022 to 2032, published on 19 January 2022, what steps his Department is taking to negotiate permission for the spouses or partners of service personnel to be able to work when accompanying personnel on deployment overseas; if he will make an assessment of the impact of negotiating those permissions on levels of early resignation from the armed forces by affected personnel; whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on the experience of that Department of negotiating those permissions for the families of diplomats posted abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Armed Forces families are at the heart of the Defence community and the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022 to 2032 acknowledged the importance of making their

recognition and care a priority. The Strategy seeks to offer choice and flexibility in allowing personnel to serve and raise a family simultaneously, with benefit to all. In developing the Strategy, we were guided by the evidence of families to focus our attention on their key areas of concern; one such was enabling a partner to manage their career alongside the service person.

Officials from the Ministry of Defence have had initial conversations with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on the subject of spousal employment. However, the parallel between Armed Forces families and those of diplomats is not a direct one. The legal position of our Armed Forces and their families overseas is determined by local agreements or memoranda, and thus differs from diplomatic staff.

Overseas assignments present families with diverse and unique experiences, but the support available can vary, depending on the host nation and the specific assignment. As part of the Armed Forces Families Strategy, we are working to help inform those families of the support that is available to them prior to their departure overseas to ensure that they are able to make well-informed decisions.

In the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), spouse/partner career is often cited as one of the top three factors influencing intentions to leave, although this is not an issue uniquely linked to overseas deployments. This question in AFCAS measures intentions, rather than actual behaviours, so this does not necessarily mean that availability of spousal employment leads to early resignation.

■ **Armed Forces: Motor Vehicles**

John Spellar:

[\[165197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many vehicles there are in his Department's white fleet (a) in total and (b) by individual service; and how many of the those vehicles are electric or hybrid.

Alex Chalk:

The majority Ministry of Defence's white fleet are leased through the Phoenix II Contract. There are a total of 15,422 vehicles leased under this contract. Of these, 728 are electric vehicles and 1,331 are hybrid vehicles. The table below sets out the numbers by Defence Organisation or Top Level Budget Holder (as of 15 March 2023):

TOTAL PHOENIX II LEASED VEHICLES

Air	3,166
Army	7,530
DE&S	214
DIO	520

TOTAL PHOENIX II LEASED VEHICLES

DNO	10
DSA	20
HO	1
MDP	536
Navy	2,213
UKSC	1,212
Total	15,422

■ **Artillery: Procurement**

John Healey: [\[168003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled British Army announces new artillery deal with Sweden, published on 16 March 2023, whether he has plans to procure further Archer artillery systems beyond the 14 announced in that release.

John Healey: [\[168004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled British Army announces new artillery deal with Sweden, published on 16 March 2023, what the (a) procurement and (b) whole life cost to the public purse was of procuring the 14 Archer artillery systems announced in that release.

John Healey: [\[168005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled British Army announces new artillery deal with Sweden, published on 16 March 2023, what the expected (a) in-service and (b) out-of-service date of the 14 Archer artillery systems announced in that release is.

John Healey: [\[168006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's press release entitled British Army announces new artillery deal with Sweden, published on 16 March 2023, when the 14 Archer artillery system announced in that release will be delivered.

John Healey: [\[168010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operating capability date is for the Archer artillery system.

Alex Chalk:

As announced on 16 March 2023, the UK has agreed a Government-to-Government sale with Sweden for the procurement of Archer artillery systems following the Granting in Kind of AS90 to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

It is intended that the first 14 Archer will have ownership transferred from Sweden to the British Army this month and will be fully operational by April 2024, forming an interim capability replacement until delivery of the long-term Mobile Fires Platform later this decade.

The contract for the procurement of the Archer platforms, including ammunition, support and training packages will be signed with Sweden shortly. It would be inappropriate to provide further information on in and out of service dates, costs, and future procurement options at this time.

RAF Halton

Luke Pollard: [\[165419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential is of RAF Halton.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 March 2023 to Question 155024.

Attachments:

1. Redford Barracks [UIN 155024.docx]

Trident Submarines

John Healey: [\[168002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of how much and what proportion of the £10 billion contingency provided by HM Treasury for the Dreadnought programme will have been spent by 31 December 2023.

Alex Chalk:

Up to March 2023, the Ministry of Defence has drawn-down £2 billion, 20 per cent, of the HM Treasury-held Dreadnought contingency. Contingency drawdown for financial year 2023-24 has not yet been agreed.

EDUCATION**Extended Services**

Rachael Maskell: [\[165333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the availability of (a) breakfast clubs and (b) after-school clubs for parents that need them; and what steps she is taking to help increase the level of provision of those clubs.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to continuing support for school breakfasts. In November 2022, the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) was extended for an additional year, until the end of the 2024 summer term. The Department is spending up to £30 million on this programme overall. This funding will support up to 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment and wellbeing. Schools are eligible for the programme if they have 40% or more pupils from disadvantaged households, as measured by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index.

Family Action estimates that 270,000 children are currently receiving a breakfast from the NSBP on an average school day. The NSBP is also undertaking data collection with all participating schools on take-up rates and effects. Relevant data will be published in due course.

Wraparound childcare for school age children is a vital service that supports working families. 66% of primary schools currently provide after school care and 65% of these schools provide both before and after school childcare. This data can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-and-college-panel-omnibus-surveys-for-2022-to-2023>.

The Government is committed to increasing the availability of wraparound childcare for parents. This is why the Government announced it would spend £289 million on a national pathfinder scheme in England as part of the Spring Budget. This will provide Local Authorities with funding across two academic years to set up wraparound provision in primary schools and will improve the availability of wraparound childcare where it is not available. This start-up funding aims to support Local Authorities and schools to test options and deliver wraparound childcare that is self financing and sustainable in the longer term.

■ Overseas Students: Fees and Charges**Zarah Sultana:****[165460]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making people who are not British citizens but are resident in the UK eligible for home fee status for the payment of tuition fees.

Robert Halfon:

To qualify for home fee status in the UK, a person must have settled status or a recognised connection to the UK. This includes people who are covered by the EU Withdrawal Agreement or who have been granted international protection by the Home Office.

Additionally, in 2016 the department introduced a new category for those who can demonstrate a substantial connection to the UK by virtue of their long residence. Students may be eligible for home fee status if they are:

- under the age of 18 and have lived in the UK through-out the seven-year period preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course; or
- aged 18 years and above who have spent half their life or at least twenty years in the UK preceding the first day of the first academic year of their course.

Those applying under the long residency category also need to demonstrate three years' ordinary lawful residence in the UK immediately preceding the beginning of the first academic year of their course, in line with most other students.

Where a student does not meet the criteria for automatic home fee status, a provider has the discretion to waive, or reduce the fees where they consider it appropriate.

■ Schools

Damien Moore:

[\[165430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress her Department has made on implementing the policies in the Schools White Paper.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to raising the attainment of all pupils. The Department is committed to its ambitions that by 2030, 90% of children will achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of primary school. Additionally, in secondary schools, the national GCSE average grade in both English language and in mathematics will increase from 4.5 in 2019 to 5.

In the 2022 Autumn Statement, the Government announced an extra £2 billion of funding for schools over each of the next two financial years (2023/24 and 2024/25), over and above totals announced at the Autumn and Budget Spending Review 2021. The additional funding will enable headteachers to continue to concentrate funding in the areas that encourage educational attainment.

Progress to date on implementing the White Paper includes establishing Oak National Academy as an arm's length body in September 2022 to provide high quality, adaptable and optional support. Oak reduces workload for teachers and enables pupils to access a high quality curriculum. The Department has introduced a fully funded new suite of National Professional Qualifications to support teacher development, based on the best available research and evidence. The Department is also delivering support to the 55 Education Investment Areas and 24 Priority Education Investment Areas.

The White Paper was clear about delivering a vision for a school system that delivers results for pupils, especially for the most vulnerable young people. The pupil premium helps fund evidence based, targeted interventions, as well as broader improvements that will benefit these pupils and help to raise their attainment. Pupil premium rates will increase by 5% for 2023/24, a £180 million increase from 2022/23, taking total pupil premium funding to £2.9 billion. The Department has made almost £5 billion available to support recovery for children and young people, including nearly £2.5

billion in targeted funding towards the most disadvantaged. This funding includes the Recovery Premium and the creation of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP). As of 6 October 2022, nearly 3 million tutoring courses had started through the NTP since November 2020.

■ Schools: Gender

Cat Smith:

[\[165256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help tackle gender stereotypes in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

Nick Gibb:

All schools are required to teach the subjects of relationships education for primary aged pupils, and relationships and sex education for secondary aged pupils. The statutory guidance for relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) emphasises that schools should be aware of issues such as sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes. Schools should take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled swiftly. The statutory RSHE guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

Under the topic of respectful relationships, the guidance sets out that pupils should be taught the characteristics of positive friendships, and how stereotypes, including stereotypes based on gender, can damage relationships or encourage prejudice.

To help schools to teach the RSHE curriculum the Department has published a range of online teacher training modules, including Respectful Relationships and Being Safe. The modules can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

■ Schools: Sports

Ben Bradley:

[\[165388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to ukactive's press released entitled Up to £57 million investment received for schools to open their sports facilities to support communities to be more active, published on 8 March, what steps (a) her Department is taking to deliver and (b) schools have to take to apply for that funding.

Nick Gibb:

On 8 March 2023, the Department announced that up to £57 million has been allocated up to March 2025 for Phase 3 of the Opening School Facilities programme to allow selected schools around England to open their sports facilities in the evenings, at weekends and during the holidays.

The Department has awarded a contract to a consortium led by Active Partnerships, who are identifying schools across England where the funding will have a positive

effect on getting the least active pupils and wider community users to participate in more sport.

Active Partnerships will support schools to create new partnerships with sport national governing bodies and local sport providers to broaden the extracurricular opportunities being delivered in the selected schools' sports facilities.

The Department can confirm that in year one, Active Nottinghamshire have already identified 19 schools in Nottinghamshire to benefit from the programme.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Sefton**

Damien Moore: [\[165379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the impact of funding levels on schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Sefton constituency.

Damien Moore: [\[165380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase funding for schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Nick Gibb:

High needs funding for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will be rising to £10.1 billion in 2023/24, which is an increase of over 50% from the 2019/20 allocations. This extra funding will help Local Authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting them.

Sefton Council's high needs funding allocation for financial year 2023/24 will be £46 million, which is a 10.9% per head increase compared to the amount of high needs funding allocated in 2022/23. It is not possible to break this funding down to individual constituency level.

The Department does not prescribe in detail how Local Authorities should allocate their high needs funding, but Local Authorities and schools have statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 to support children and young people with SEND.

■ **Students: Cost of Living**

Cat Smith: [\[165291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to helping students with the cost of living.

Robert Halfon:

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

The government reviews the support provided to cover students' living costs on an annual basis. Decisions on student finance will have to be taken alongside other spending priorities to ensure that the system remains financially sustainable, and that

the costs of higher education are shared fairly between students and taxpayers, not all of whom have benefited from going to university.

To help students who need further support we have made an additional £15 million available increasing our student premium funding to £276 million this academic year. This extra funding will act in addition to the help universities are providing through their own bursary, scholarship, and hardship support schemes. The department works with the Office for Students to ensure universities support students using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

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

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding will provide £400 support to those households without a direct relationship to a domestic electricity supplier in England, Scotland, and Wales, who have faced increased energy bill costs since 1 October 2022. This will include students in privately rented accommodation, where they receive their energy from an intermediary (such as a landlord or letting agency) who holds a commercial electricity contract.

The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 includes the provision which requires landlords to pass any benefits they receive from energy price support onto end users, as appropriate.

Tenants should not need to take action to receive this benefit as the obligation is on intermediaries, such as landlords, to pass through the benefit and provide the information necessary to do so. If a student believes this obligation has not been met, they are advised to contact their landlord, or, intermediary to resolve this in the first instance. Within the regulations, there is also scope to pursue enforcement through civil proceedings.

Further guidance on the pass-through requirement can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-provided-to-intermediaries/guidance-on-the-pass-through-requirements-for-energy-price-support-in-great-britain-provided-to-intermediaries>.

Students in purpose-built student accommodation are not eligible to receive support under the scheme, as with fixed rental fees set ahead of the academic year, they have not been exposed to unexpectedly higher energy bill costs this Winter.

For students living in university, or private halls, businesses, including those that provide student accommodation, are covered by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which provides energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in Great Britain.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including universities and private purpose-built student accommodation providers, are protected from high energy bills this winter.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO**■ Energy Bills Rebate: Houseboats and Park Homes****Cat Smith:**[\[165290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of households living in (a) park homes and (b) houseboats that are (i) eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund payment and (ii) have not applied for that payment as of 14 March 2023.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government has estimated that there are 131,000 park home residents, houseboats, and caravans who can provide proof of address are eligible for the EBSS AF. We do not at this stage have figures on the number of these households who have not yet applied for the scheme.

■ Energy: Arrears**Damien Moore:**[\[165496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he is taking steps against energy providers that fail to account for levels of customer vulnerability when recovering arrears.

Andrew Bowie:

Ofgem rules, including the Ability to Pay Principle, obligate suppliers to provide appropriate support for those struggling to pay their bills by setting up repayment plans based on a customer's ability to pay, and providing additional support credit to customers in vulnerable circumstances.

The Government recently launched a 5-point plan to tackle issues around prepayment meters and support for vulnerable customers. This includes coordination with Ofgem to ensure they take a more robust approach to the protection of vulnerable customers, and they conduct a review to make sure suppliers are complying with rules.

■ Energy: Government Assistance**Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[168094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether the Government is taking further steps to provide extra financial support for those who are eligible for the Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Fund but who pay for their energy at a non-domestic rate through a landlord, including park home residents.

Andrew Bowie:

Eligible applicants of the EBSS AF, including those who pay for their energy at a non-domestic rate through a landlord, such as park home residents, may also be eligible to receive additional support. Landlords who are in receipt of the Energy Bills Relief Scheme, such as park home owners, must also ensure this support is passed

through to the end user in a just and reasonable manner. Households who use alternative fuels as their primary source of heating are able to apply for the Alternative Fuel Payments Alternative Fund if they have not received support automatically.

■ Energy: Hospices

Sir John Hayes:

[\[165205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of the average increase in energy costs incurred by hospices that will not be covered by the Energy Bills Discount Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Bowie:

The new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will run from April 2023 until March 2024, and continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including hospices and care homes.

It is not possible to estimate what the proportion of the discount or average increase would be, as these will solely be determined by consumption, and the discount applied on this basis. We do not hold data of hospices and care homes that may be covered by the Energy Bill Discount Scheme as energy providers will apply the discount directly to the energy bills of their eligible non-domestic customers.

■ Energy: Meters

Rachael Maskell:

[\[165485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a compensation scheme for people who had prepayment meters installed without due diligence taking place.

Andrew Bowie:

Regulation of the energy supply sector is for independent regulator Ofgem.

As part of the review, announced on 21 February, to support and protect energy customers when suppliers fit prepayment meters by force or via remote switch, Ofgem has been clear that suppliers should offer compensation as appropriate where the strict rules have not been followed, and should not wait for the outcome of compliance action to do this.

■ Energy: Post Offices

Zarah Sultana:

[\[165457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising energy costs on Post Offices.

Andrew Bowie:

During the Energy Bill Relief Scheme review, the Government assessed a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence from businesses and stakeholders, including

Post Offices, on sectors that may be most affected by rising energy prices based on energy and trade intensity.

The outcome of the review informed the criteria of the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme, which will run from April until March 2024, and will continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including Post Offices. The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses and other non-domestic customers over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets.

■ Energy: Prices

Jim Shannon:

[\[165249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent steps he has taken with Cabinet colleagues to help support disabled people with the cost of energy.

Andrew Bowie:

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024. As part of this work, the Government is working with disability organisations, assessing the need for specific support for disabled people.

Additionally, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments split into three payments of around £300 each. Pensioner households will receive a separate £300 payment on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[165486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of requiring energy companies to cover the costs of any differential between a standard customer tariff and a prepayment customer tariff.

Andrew Bowie:

Under the Ofgem Energy Price Cap methodology, energy suppliers can change the efficient cost to supply energy, and the cost incurred for each payment method is one of the variables in this calculation.

The Government has announced that the cost differential between customers paying by direct debit and prepayment customers will be covered through the Energy Price Guarantee from 1 July this year. This will save a comparable prepayment meter customer £45 a year on average.

Ofgem are looking at options for removing the cost difference between direct debit and prepayment from April 2024.

■ Gold: Imports

Andrew Selous:

[\[165305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of gold mined for import into the UK on the UK's environmental footprint.

Graham Stuart:

This is not a matter for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

■ Heating: Housing

Sir Gary Streeter:

[\[165195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has considered the potential merits of promoting the use of hydrogenated vegetable oil for domestic heating.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is currently investigating what role renewable liquid fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil could play in the future low carbon heating mix. As sustainable biomass is a limited resource, the Government believes that the use of biofuels in heating is likely to be limited to properties where heat pumps cannot be used. The Government will prioritise its use in sectors that offer the greatest opportunity to reduce emissions, and where there are fewest options to decarbonise through alternative low carbon technologies.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[168093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason an eligible person who is not the named bill payer is not able to access the warm home discount scheme for winter 2022-23.

Andrew Bowie:

This rule was adopted as the named bill payer is responsible for any payment issued on the electricity account. It also ensures that the Government can verify customers' eligibility and reduces the risk of fraudulent claims. There are exceptions when an eligible customer's partner is named on the electricity bill and linked on their DWP benefit record, or when an eligible customer has a DWP Appointee or other legally appointed representative who is named on the bill.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Products: Imports

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[165303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what her planned timescale is for prohibiting the import of hunting trophies.

Trudy Harrison:

The Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill passed Report stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons on Friday 17 March. The Bill will now move to the House of Lords and the timetable for the Lords stages will be announced in the usual way. The prohibition will come into force following Royal Assent of the Bill.

■ **Badgers: Bovine Tuberculosis**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[167187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date was the last confirmed positive case of bovine tuberculosis in badgers in Hampshire.

Mark Spencer:

Surveillance for TB in badgers has not taken place in Hampshire for many years. To address this evidence gap Defra funded the 'Southern Edge Area RTA survey' where, in collaboration with the University of Nottingham, we are carrying out post-mortem investigation of badgers found dead on the roads, including in Hampshire. Results will be available in due course, once final analysis has been carried out. Badgers removed under licence in cull operations, including those in Hampshire, are not routinely tested for TB.

■ **Canal and River Trust: Finance**

Justin Madders: [\[169327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to announce grant settlements for the Canal and River Trust.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's review of the grant funding for the Canal and River Trust is ongoing. We expect to announce the decision on future grant funding later in the spring.

■ **Food: Imports**

Gareth Thomas: [\[165193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of bringing forward a strategy on food and drink imports.

Mark Spencer:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues, and Cabinet discussions are considered confidential. We enjoy a high degree of domestic food security, based on strong domestic production as well as imports. The Government Food Strategy was published in June 2022 which set out a plan to transform our food system to ensure it is fit for the future.

■ Food: Labelling

Henry Smith:

[\[169248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to publish a consultation on food labelling.

Mark Spencer:

The UK maintains high standards on the information that is provided on food labels so that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy. The Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers.

For example, in 2021 Defra ran a call for evidence to gather data on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare. A summary of these responses is available on GOV.UK. Based on the evidence provided, Defra committed in the Government's Food Strategy to consult on improving and expanding mandatory animal welfare labelling in 2023.

■ Hunting Trophy Import (Prohibition) Bill: Africa

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[164024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which African nations have expressed support for the UK Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill; and if she will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

The Hunting Trophies Bill has now completed its passage through the House of Commons, meaning that we are one step closer to delivering the commitment we made in our manifesto. I am grateful to the governments of all the countries that have engaged with Defra on this issue, including during the consultation and call for evidence and throughout the development of policy and legislation. Partners have given a range of views, in particular on the potential costs, benefits and impacts of the policy options considered.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Peter Aldous:

[\[167095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to propose new Marine Protected Areas under the mechanism established by the new High Seas Treaty.

Peter Aldous:

[\[167096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to support high seas marine protected areas in relevant regional fisheries management organisations..

Mark Spencer:

Draft text for an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine

biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction - the BBNJ Agreement - was agreed on 5 March. It will be adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference at a further meeting, later this year. This is a landmark agreement for biodiversity and will mean much greater protection for over 60% of the global ocean.

The UK will work to ratify the Agreement as soon as possible, and work with global partners to ensure it is implemented quickly and effectively.

The UK uses its engagement in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and other international forums to push for outcomes focused on managing fisheries sustainably, protecting marine ecosystems (including through Marine Protected Areas) and combatting illegal fishing.

■ Poultry: Industry

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[168035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help protect the domestic poultry industry from unfair competition from other countries which have lower energy costs or lower production standards.

Mark Spencer:

The Government is proud of the high food safety and animal welfare standards that underpin our high-quality Great British produce. We put British farming at the heart of our trade policy and have no intention of undercutting our own reputation for quality by lowering our standards in pursuit of a trade deal.

In all trade agreements we negotiate, we will stand up for British farming and aim to secure new opportunities for the industry. We will always look to ensure that UK Free Trade Agreements are fair and reciprocal, and that any 'opening up' does not cause an unwanted downturn for domestic producers.

We are also working hard to support a thriving and profitable domestic industry. In December 2022 I hosted a roundtable for UK egg producers to discuss the challenges that the industry has been facing due to the increase in input costs. We have relaxed marketing rules on the sale of defrosted seasonal poultry products and allowed concessions to the sale of free-range eggs impacted by Avian Influenza housing restrictions. In addition, since November 2022, the poultry industry has been able to access the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS). In January 2023 the Government announced the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) that will replace EBRS when it comes to an end on 31st March 2023. This new scheme will run until 31st March 2024. Following a review of the EBRS, the Government will target a higher level of support under the EBDS at the most energy and trade intensive sectors – which are primarily manufacturing businesses – in addition to the broader EBDS support. Poultry meat processing falls within the remit of the Government's Energy Intensive Industries exemption scheme and will therefore also qualify for the enhanced level of support.

We continue to keep the sector under close review, including through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments.

■ **Trapping: Licensing**

Mark Tami:

[\[168024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she plans to commence the Glue Traps (Offences) Act 2022; and whether she plans to use the statutory powers in that Act to introduce a glue trap licensing scheme for England.

Trudy Harrison:

The Glue Traps (Offences) Act does not stipulate a commencement date but as stated during the passage of the Bill, the intention is to bring the Act into effect after a two year transition period.

I intend to use the statutory powers of the Act to introduce a licencing regime in order to permit the use of glue traps in England in the most exceptional circumstances by professional pest controllers for the purposes of preserving public health and safety, when there is no satisfactory alternative.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Customs: Cairnryan Port**

Richard Thomson:

[\[167242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she is taking steps with the Scottish Government to help ensure that illicit and unsafe goods from the EU are not able to enter the UK through Cairnryan.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government is unequivocal in its commitment for unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods to the whole United Kingdom market. As to goods which do not qualify for unfettered access, anti-avoidance provisions are already in place to deal with businesses moving their goods through Northern Ireland with a view to avoiding UK customs duties or customs formalities. HMRC also has the ability to seize illicit goods, issue assessments and charge penalties where there is evidence of deliberate non-compliance. We will continue to work in partnership with the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations to ensure a coordinated approach to the border.

■ **Iraq: Religious Freedom**

Jim Shannon:

[\[166229\]](#)

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 report of the United

States Commission on International Religious Freedom on freedom of religion or belief in Iraq.

David Rutley:

We note the findings in the report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, including on prolonged government formation and freedom of religion and belief in Iraq. Promotion of the right to freedom of religion and belief is a longstanding human rights priority for the UK and we are firmly committed to the protection of ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq. Lord Ahmad raised this with religious and political leaders during his visit to Iraq earlier this month.

■ **Jordan: Refugees**

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[166255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department's programmes supporting refugees in Jordan address (a) water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure and (b) their impact on the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

David Rutley:

The UK is one of the leading donors in supporting refugees in Jordan and has contributed over £704 million in bilateral development assistance to Jordan since 2011. We recognise the pressure of water scarcity in Jordan and are helping the Government of Jordan reform its energy and water sectors to be more financial and environmentally sustainable, which will benefit refugees and Jordanians alike. The UK is supporting Jordan's adaptation through the PHENOMENAL programme, which covers key sectors of the national adaptation plan. This includes a waste-water plant and technical support in water management. The UK does not currently deliver health sector programmes, including on antimicrobial resistance, in Jordan. However, we have funded water, sanitation and hygiene activities in both Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps.

■ **Said Ferjani**

Hilary Benn:

[\[168022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Tunisian counterpart on the release of Said Ferjani.

David Rutley:

Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for North Africa, raised the UK's issue with the recent wave of arrests directly with Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February, underlining the importance of due legal process and respect for freedom of expression and association. His Majesty's Ambassador to Tunisia also raised UK concerns regarding the arrests with Foreign Minister Nabil Ammar on 23 February. Officials and Ministers have regular discussions with the Tunisian authorities to reiterate the UK's belief in the importance of space for legitimate political opposition,

civil society, strengthening human rights and including all voices in building resilient and successful democracies. We will continue to engage the Tunisian authorities on these issues.

■ Tunisia: Politics and Government

Damien Moore:

[\[166343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has held discussions with his counterpart in Tunisia on the political freedoms and arrest of Rached el-Ghannouchi.

David Rutley:

Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for North Africa, raised the UK's issues with the recent wave of arrests directly with Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February, underlining the importance of due legal process and respect for freedom of expression and association. His Majesty's Ambassador to Tunisia also raised UK issues with the arrests with Foreign Minister Nabil Ammar on 23 February. Officials and Ministers have regular discussions with the Tunisian authorities to reiterate the UK's belief in the importance of space for legitimate political opposition, civil society, strengthening human rights and including all voices in building resilient and successful democracies.

Crispin Blunt:

[\[167990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in Tunisia on (a) Said Ferjani and (b) other Parliamentarians who have been arrested and remain in custody since the suspension of the Tunisian Parliament.

David Rutley:

Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for North Africa, raised the UK's Issue with the recent wave of arrests directly with Tunisian Chargé d'Affaires on 23 February, underlining the importance of due legal process and respect for freedom of expression and association. His Majesty's Ambassador to Tunisia also raised UK concerns regarding the arrests with Foreign Minister Nabil Ammar on 23 February. Officials and Ministers have regular discussions with the Tunisian authorities to reiterate the UK's belief in the importance of space for legitimate political opposition, civil society, strengthening human rights and including all voices in building resilient and successful democracies. We will continue to engage the Tunisian authorities on these issues.

■ Ukraine: War Crimes

Wendy Morton:

[\[166247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help ensure that child victims are considered in efforts to bring perpetrators of alleged war crimes in Ukraine to justice.

Leo Docherty:

The announcements made by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on March 17 represent an important step for accountability and demonstrate that the international justice system is working. The UK wants to see those responsible for the atrocities that have been committed in Ukraine, including those against children, held to account. We are supporting the ICC and Ukrainian Prosecutor General in their independent investigations into allegations of war crimes committed in Ukraine.

Wendy Morton:[\[166248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take diplomatic steps to make experts available to support the collection, documentation and analysis of evidence of potential war crimes against children in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has allocated up to £2.5 million this year to support Ukraine's domestic investigations and prosecution of international crimes, including sexual violence and crimes against children. In Ukraine, we are providing personnel from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to support capacity building amongst prosecutors and the police as well as support to victims, including women and children.

The £1 million additional contribution that the UK has provided to the International Criminal Court will enhance capacity on investigations into crimes of sexual and gender-based violence and crimes against children, led by the Prosecutors' special adviser on crimes against and affecting children.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Care Quality Commission: Finance****Liz Kendall:**[\[165366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2023 to Question 135230 on Care Quality Commission: Finance, how much funding from the public purse was allocated to the Care Quality Commission in each year since 2010.

Maria Caulfield:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is funded primarily by fees collected from the health and adult social care providers it registers and regulates.

The following table shows the funding the Department allocated to CQC in each year since 2013. The Department is required to keep detailed financial records for six years and therefore information prior to 2013 is not held centrally.

FINANCIAL YEAR	CQC FUNDING (IN MILLIONS)
2013/2014	£87.30
2014/2015	£126.00
2015/2016	£135.00
2016/2017	£81.70
2017/2018	£43.10
2018/2019	£39.50
2019/2020	£36.40
2020/2021	£31.70
2021/2022	£32.20

■ Dementia and Lumbar Puncture

Ian Byrne:

[\[168105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to (a) increase diagnostic capacity for lumbar punctures and (b) prepare services for new dementia treatments following the approval of lecanemab in the USA.

Ian Byrne:

[\[168106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance entitled Dementia: assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers, published on 20 June 2018, what assessment his Department has made of whether Memory Assessment Services have sufficient capacity to offer lumbar punctures for the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS England is currently exploring what pathways, processes and equipment might best support future disease modifying treatments, including for Alzheimer's disease. Any decision on the potential scale of testing infrastructure to support the administration of Lecanemab will take account of numerous factors including whether Lecanemab is determined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to be a clinically and cost-effective National Health Service treatment option.

■ Dementia: Care Homes**David Johnston:** [\[165464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of care home residents with dementia but without a psychosis diagnosis have been prescribed anti-psychotic drugs in the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

This information is not held in the format requested. The number of people living with dementia but without a diagnosis of psychosis who have been prescribed antipsychotic medication in the last six weeks was 31,451 at the end of February 2023.

■ Dementia: Hearing Impairment**Mary Glendon:** [\[169284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that a hearing check is added to the dementia component of the NHS health check.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department currently has no plans to add a hearing check to the dementia component of the NHS Health Check. In 2019, an Expert Advisory Panel advised against including a hearing assessment as part of an NHS Health Check. This advice was informed by the UK National Screening Committee (UKNSC) which, following a review of evidence, recommended against screening for hearing loss. The UKNSC's recommendation remained unchanged following an update to this review in 2021.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Disability**Chris Stephens:** [R] [\[151321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps they have taken in their Department to operate the Disability Confident employer scheme for those seeking a lateral transfer; and how many and what proportion of candidates who declared themselves as having a disability and who applied under that scheme where (a) interviewed and (b) laterally transferred in (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 28 February 2023]: The Department of Health and Social Care is proud to have achieved Disability Confident Leader status under the Government's Disability Confident scheme.

The Disability Confident scheme was formally launched by the Department for Work and Pensions in November 2016. It is designed to give employers the skills, techniques and confidence they need to recruit, retain and develop disabled staff.

To receive an interview, applicants must meet the minimum criteria for the role. Exceptions may apply if, due to the volume of applications, we are not able to interview all eligible candidates who qualify under the scheme.

In the table below we have outlined the overall number of existing Civil Servant candidates who applied for a job advertised either across the Department of Health and Social Care or across the Civil Service; and whose application was both under the Disability Confident scheme and not on promotion within each calendar year.

	2021	2022
Number of existing Civil Servants who applied under the Disability Confident scheme and were not seeking a promotion	126	112
Of which were interviewed	21 (17%)	29 (26%)
Of which were offered a role	5 (24%)	8 (28%)

Please note that disabled candidates may apply for roles outside of the Disability Confident scheme and there is no obligation to disclose a disability when applying for a role. The question of "Applying for Promotion" is only asked for vacancies which are advertised internally or across Government and therefore no externally advertised vacancies are included in the data set. Candidates may withdraw from the process between application, interview or being offered the role.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Staff

Wes Streeting:

[\[149587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total number of full-time equivalent staff employed by his Department was in (a) 2022 and (b) each of the last 13 years.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 27 February 2023]: The following table shows the Department's total number of fulltime equivalent (FTE) for 2022 and each of the last 13 years.

YEAR	FTE
2009	2903.4
2010	2572.3
2011	2328.6
2012	2242.0
2013	1839.8
2014	1949.1

YEAR	FTE
2015	1930.5
2016	1756.5
2017	1447.1
2018	1526.1
2019	1684.0
2020	2899.9
2021	3170.0
2022	3778.0

A programme of work is currently underway within the Department to ensure that we have the most efficient headcount to deliver our priorities.

The Department increased in size during this period to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, 1018 FTE joined the Department with the creation of Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities in October 2021. However, the colleagues who transitioned from Public Health England (PHE) were not recorded in the Department data system until early 2022 and therefore do not appear in the 2021 figure on GOV.UK shown here. The 2022 figure includes former PHE colleagues.

Notes:

1. Figures as of 31 December each year.
2. Figures from 2012 onwards are taken from published data available as transparency statistics at www.gov.uk/government/collections/dhsc-workforce-management-information.
3. Figures prior to 2013 have been drawn from the Department's archives.
4. Figures published on GOV.UK do not show the full establishment workforce of the Department. Contingent Labour, Secondments In, Fast Streamers and vacancies are not included.

■ Drug Resistance: Immigration Removal Centres

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[166251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of (a) antimicrobial resistance and (b) drug resistant infections in immigration detention centres.

Maria Caulfield:

No assessment has been made.

The Government is committed to tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and reducing the risk of drug-resistant infections for all people. In 2019, the Government published a 20-Year Vision to effectively contain, control and mitigate AMR by 2040, and the first in a series of five-year national action plans to support the Vision.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[166253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the prevalence of antimicrobial resistant organisms in immigration detention centres.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[168064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to ban the use of single use disposable vaping devices.

Neil O'Brien:

There are no immediate plans to introduce a ban on disposable vaping devices. However, the Government is concerned by the increasing use of disposable vaping products, particularly amongst children, and their impact on the environment when they become waste. We are exploring a range of measures to address these issues.

■ **Fractures: Health Services**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[168110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that every NHS trust in England has a Fracture Liaison Service.

Helen Whately:

Fracture Liaison Services (FLS) are commissioned by integrated care boards (ICBs) who are best placed to make decisions according to local need. ICBs are responsible for developing a forward plan that sets out how the ICB intends to arrange health services within its area, including secondary fracture prevention services such as FLS.

NHS England is working at the national and regional level with ICBs to support the mobilisation and implementation of FLS in each area and establish a greater number of clinics, as part of elective recovery plans. NHS England is also developing regional bone health clinical networks to support clinicians working in FLS.

■ **Health Services: Gender**

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[\[156984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued to NHS trusts on the provision of the same-sex staffing for patients receiving intimate care.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department is considering whether clearer guidance is needed on the provision of same-sex staffing for patients receiving intimate care. Guidance by the Care Quality Commission states that “When providing intimate or personal care, provider must make every reasonable effort to make sure that they respect people's preferences about who delivers their care and treatment, such as requesting staff of a specified gender/sex.” The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/regulations-enforcement/regulation-10-dignity-respect>

■ Hospitals: Construction

Olivia Blake: [164003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) lowest, (b) highest and (c) average daily rate paid to consultants working on the new hospitals programme was in the latest period for which data is available.

Olivia Blake: [164004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of staff working on the new hospitals programme are (a) management consultants, (b) NHS officials and (c) other civil servants.

Olivia Blake: [164005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide (a) a list of all firms engaged on advisory or consultancy work by the new hospital building programme in the financial year (i) 2021/22 and (ii) 2022/23 to date, (b) the number of staff working on the programme from each firm, (c) a description of each contract, including the start and end date and (d) the total value of each contract.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 20 March 2023]: The consultants the New Hospital Programme has engaged with have been specialists who have brought highly technical skills, support and experience needed for a programme of this size and complexity. The total spending on consultants to support specific, time-limited, critical elements of the Programme at this stage, particularly the set-up of the Programmatic approach, will enable an overall reduction in Programme costs compared to a traditional approach to building hospitals.

The New Hospital Programme is a joint unit between the Department and NHS England; as such, we have individuals employed directly by the Department and NHS England. The total headcount for the New Hospital Programme is 125 staff either permanent, temporary, or loaned. The Programme does not have consultants that form part of the headcount. There are 149 full-time equivalent consultants engaged with the Programme as of February 2023.

Disclosure of the lowest, highest, and average daily rates paid to consultants could hinder the Programme's future purchasing position in relation to the procurement of

similar services and release would prejudice commercial interests. However, information on all contract award notices can be found on Contracts Finder at GOV.UK under 'NHP' and awarded by either the Department or NHS England & NHS Improvement (this does not include individual trust contracts).

Sarah Owen:

[\[165462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the New Hospital Programme ensures that rest facilities follow the standards set by the (a) Association of Anaesthetists, (b) Royal College of Anaesthetists and (c) Faculty of Intensive Care Medicines Fight Fatigue Campaign.

Will Quince:

The health and wellbeing needs of staff are central elements of our new hospital designs. A particular focus will be on staff spaces, including rest rooms, wellbeing areas and changing facilities. Our stakeholder engagement ensures that diverse representation from staff groups, Royal Colleges, academies, and associations is included in hospital design workshops. Our continuous interactions with members of the workforce are helping to ensure that designs are fit for purpose now and in the future.

■ Hospitals: Discharges

Liz Kendall:

[\[165373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were waiting to be discharged from hospital for one week or more despite being identified as medically fit for discharge on 13 March 2023.

Liz Kendall:

[\[165374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients had been waiting to be discharged from hospital for two weeks or more despite being identified as medically fit for discharge on 13 March 2023.

Liz Kendall:

[\[165375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were waiting to be discharged from hospital for three weeks or more despite being identified as medically fit for discharge on 13 March 2023.

Liz Kendall:

[\[165376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were waiting to be discharged from hospital for four weeks or more despite being identified as medically fit for discharge on 13 March 2023.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Maternity Services: Standards

Zarah Sultana:

[\[165449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure safe, sustainable staffing levels across maternity services; and what steps he is taking to ensure families affected by baby loss are offered adequate and specialised bereavement support.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department is committed to expanding midwifery training places by 3,650 over a four year period. Increases of 626 in 2019/20 and 1,140 in 2020/21 were achieved, and as of January 2023, the student data collection is showing an increase of 1271 in 2021/22. An additional £127 million was also invested in 2022 to go into the maternity system to help increase the National Health Service maternity workforce and improve neonatal care.

The Government funded the Stillbirths and Neonatal Death charity to work with other baby loss charities and Royal Colleges to produce and support the roll-out of a National Bereavement Care Pathway (NBCP). The pathway covers a range of circumstances of a baby loss including miscarriage, stillbirth, termination of pregnancy for medical reasons, neonatal death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. As of 1 January 2023, 108 NHS England trusts (84%) have committed to adopting the nine NBCP standards.

■ NHS: Audiology

Afzal Khan:

[\[168098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS England's 2023-24 priorities and operational planning guidance, whether the introduction of self-referral to NHS audiology services is in addition to the system of GP referral.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England published its 2023/24 priorities and operational planning guidance to implement the aims of the NHS Long Term Plan. The Plan seeks to expand direct access and self-referral where general practitioner (GP) involvement is not clinically necessary, including audiology services. This is in addition to the system of GP referral.

Expanding direct access and self-referrals empowers patients to take control of their healthcare, streamlines access to services and reduces unnecessary burden on GP appointments.

■ NHS: Vacancies

Tracey Crouch:

[\[166187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce shortages in the NHS workforce and (b) improve the capacity of NHS services.

Will Quince:

We continue to grow the National Health Service workforce. As of December, there were over 4,900 (3.8%) more doctors and almost 11,100 (3.6%) more nurses than the same time last year. We are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses across the NHS by 2024 and have over 38,000 more nurses in December 2022 compared with September 2019. The Government has funded 1,500 more medical school places each year for domestic students in England, a 25% increase, taking the total number to 7,500 each year.

We are also expanding routes into professional roles in the NHS, particularly apprenticeships. Apprenticeships allow people to earn as they learn, benefiting those for whom a full-time university course is not practical or preferred. There were around 20,900 new NHS apprenticeships starts in 2021/22, making NHS the largest employer of apprentices in the public sector by number of starts. There has also been funding confirmed as part of a pilot scheme for up to 200 Medical Doctor Degree Apprentices.

All eligible nursing, midwifery and allied health profession degree students have received a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year. Additional funding is also available for studying certain courses for example, Mental Health Nursing and Learning Disabilities Nursing with further financial support available to students for childcare, dual accommodation costs and travel.

We have commissioned NHS England to develop a long term workforce plan for the NHS workforce for the next 15 years. This Plan is due to be published shortly.

To boost capacity, on 30 January we published the delivery plan for recovering urgent and emergency care services and committed to increase capacity, including with 5,000 new beds as part of the permanent bed base for next winter. This is backed by £1 billion of dedicated funding, building on the £500 million used over this winter to support local areas to increase their overall capacity and support their staff.

■ Osteoporosis: Screening**Nadia Whittome:**[\[168109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will introduce a national screening programme for osteoporosis.

Neil O'Brien:

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) last reviewed the evidence to screen for osteoporosis in postmenopausal women in 2019 and recommended that a population screening programme should not be introduced. The review identified that there were key areas of uncertainty around the test and treatment and that further research was needed.

The UK NSC is due to review its recommendation as per its regular review cycle and Ministers will consider this before making a decision. In the meantime, there is guidance on the assessment, diagnosis and management of osteoporosis from the

National Institute of Health and Care Excellence and the National Osteoporosis Guideline Group.

■ Protective Clothing: Storage

Angela Rayner: [\[151312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of personal protective equipment purchased by the Government are in storage in warehouses in China; and what the cost to the public purse is of that storage on average in January 2023.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 28 February 2023]: As of 31 January 2023, there were 118,000,000 items of personal protective equipment stored in China. The average cost of storage was £30,000 a day for the month of January 2023.

■ Suicide

Kerry McCarthy: [\[165359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the development of the national suicide prevention strategy.

Maria Caulfield:

There have been no specific discussions. The Department is working across Government, with the health system and with suicide prevention stakeholders, to ensure the new suicide prevention strategy reflects the most up to date evidence and addresses the current challenges, risks, and opportunities to prevent suicide.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Kate Osamor: [\[165401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of people who would not be eligible for asylum under the Illegal Migration Bill who would be eligible to be sent to (a) a third country and (b) their country of origin.

Robert Jenrick:

The Illegal Migration Bill will change the law so that people who come to the UK illegally can be detained and then swiftly returned to a safe third country or their home country. If they cannot be returned to their home country, then they will be relocated to a third safe country, such as Rwanda, where they will receive support to rebuild their lives. If someone is identified as a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, we will ensure they are safely returned home or to another safe country, away from those who have trafficked them.

The Secretary of State is not required to make arrangements to remove an unaccompanied child from the UK until they turn 18 years old, but there is a power to do so. As a matter of current policy this power will only be exercised in limited circumstances ahead of them reaching adulthood, such as for the purposes of family reunion or where removal is to a safe country of origin.

■ Asylum: Applications

Seema Malhotra:

[\[165257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the guidance entitled Streamlined asylum processing, published on 23 February 2023, how many people who had their asylum applications accepted were not interviewed according to that guidance in the latest period for which data is available.

Robert Jenrick:

The data requested is not routinely published.

■ Asylum: Housing

Kate Osamor:

[\[165397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that private providers of asylum accommodation meet minimum standards.

Robert Jenrick:

Accommodation for supported asylum seekers is arranged by private sector providers through contractual arrangements with the Home Office. We expect high standards from all of our providers, and we have a robust governance framework in place to manage service delivery of the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC). Details of the AASC can be found at:

[New asylum accommodation contracts awarded - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-asylum-accommodation-contracts-awarded).

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help where they can raise any concerns regarding accommodation or support services, and they can get information about how to obtain further support.

■ Biometric Residence Permits: ICT

Deidre Brock:

[\[165293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of IT issues in her Department on the production of Biometric Resident Permits since 1 January 2023.

Deidre Brock:

[165294]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many IT problem managers have been employed in her Department to resolve IT failures impacting UKVI applications in each month since 1 September 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The incidences of technical issues preventing Biometric Resident Permit (BRP) card production are low. Where issues are encountered operational case working teams and IT Support endeavour to resolve the issue swiftly without any adverse impacts for the customer.

For the very small proportion of cases that could not be resolved immediately, the Employer Checking Service (ECS) and Landlord Checking Service (LCS) are available to provide support to customers to verify their immigration status and permission to work and rent properties in the UK.

Longer term, the Home Office is developing a border and immigration system which will be digital by default. The ambition is to phase out physical documents, such as BRP's, before the end of 2024 as we move towards a system of online evidence of immigration status (eVisas).

■ **British Nationality: Applications**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[165436]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what process her Department has for assessing citizenship applications from people who previously obtained a spousal visa through the submission of fraudulent documentation.

Robert Jenrick:

The requirements to naturalise as a British citizen are set out in the British Nationality Act 1981 and require a person to be of good character. An application to naturalise would normally fall be refused where a person has employed deception:

- during the citizenship application process
- in a previous immigration application in the previous 10 years

Guidance on the Good Character requirement can be found on GOV.UK:

[Good character: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-character-caseworker-guidance).

■ **Detainees: Children**

Kate Osamor:

[165400]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Illegal Migration Bill would permit the indefinite detention of children.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not detain people indefinitely and the powers in the Bill do not provide for this.

The Bill will create new detention powers which will allow us to detain a person pending a decision as to whether the new duty to remove applies, and thereafter to detain pending their removal. These new powers will not be time limited; however, in line with our other existing immigration detention powers, detention will be limited to a reasonable period of time.

Families will be kept together wherever possible and children will only be detained for as short a period as possible and in age-appropriate accommodation. The Secretary of State is not required to make arrangements to remove an unaccompanied child from the UK until they become adults, but there is a power to do so. As a matter of current policy, this power will only be exercised in very limited circumstances ahead of them reaching adulthood, such as for the purposes of family reunion or where removal is to a safe country of origin.

■ **HM Passport Office: Staff**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[168053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Public and Commercial Services Union on the pay, terms and conditions of Passport Office staff.

Robert Jenrick:

We are disappointed with the union's decision to strike after engaging in constructive talks to find a resolution.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[168054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of potential industrial action by Passport Office staff in April 2023 on the processing capability of the Passport Office.

Robert Jenrick:

His Majesty's Passport Office are working to manage the impact of strike action, whilst ensuring they can continue to deliver vital services to the public, with comprehensive contingency plans in place.

There are currently no plans to change our guidance which states that it takes up to ten weeks to get a passport.

■ **Illegal Migration Bill**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[161356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on victims of modern slavery who have been trafficked to the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK government remains committed to tackling the heinous crime of modern slavery and supporting victims.

The Illegal Migration Bill will crack down on the opportunities to abuse modern slavery protections, by preventing people who come to the UK through illegal and dangerous journeys from misusing modern slavery safeguards to block their removal.

We are working on developing guidance regarding the operation of these measures, including any potential impacts and how they relate to victims of Modern Slavery, to be introduced when it is appropriate to do so once the Illegal Migration Bill has progressed through Parliament.

■ Immigration Removal Centres

Kate Osamor: [\[165399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the maximum capacity will be for new asylum detention centres.

Robert Jenrick:

An economic impact assessment will be published for the Illegal Migration Bill in due course.

■ Independent Family Returns Panel

Caroline Nokes: [\[169253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Independent Family Returns Panel will have a role in oversight of the removal of children seeking asylum to Rwanda.

Caroline Nokes: [\[169254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to abolish the Independent Family Returns Panel.

Caroline Nokes: [\[169255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on the remit of the Independent Family Returns Panel.

Robert Jenrick:

We are not abolishing the Independent Family Returns Panel (IFRP). We are removing the duty to consult them in order to swiftly remove those families who fall for removal under the Illegal Migration Bill. However, we remain in open dialogue with the IFRP about the role they will have in the removal of those families with children who fall within the remit of the Bill. The IFRP will continue to play an important role in the removal of families with children who do not fall within the remit of the Illegal Migration Bill.

■ Marriage: Fraud

Hilary Benn:

[\[165225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2023 to Question 157620 on Marriage Fraud, how many individuals have been reported for fraudulent marriage to a foreign citizen by email and post; how many times this has led to her Department cancelling a right to remain; and how many of these individuals have been removed from the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

Whilst Home Office Immigration Enforcement publishes information relating to the number of allegations it receives each quarter, allegations relating specifically to fraudulent marriage are not reported upon separately and it is not possible to provide information relating to the number of these allegations received.

The Home Office do not record where information detailing relationship breakdowns are sent from, nor do they record the reason for the relationship failure.

The specific information requested relating to returns is not available in our published data. Our published data on returns is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2020/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned>.

■ New Businesses: Visas

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[168031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support individuals whose Start-Up visas expire before the introduction of the revised Innovator visa.

Robert Jenrick:

The current provision for those switching from Start-up to Innovator remains in operation until the 13th April and applicants will be able to obtain endorsement in the usual manner until that date.

■ RAF Scampton: Regeneration

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[165221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent public consultations she has held on plans to redevelop RAF Scampton.

Robert Jenrick:

No recent public consultations have been held on plans to develop RAF Scampton.

■ Refugees: Development Aid**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[139300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish an itemised breakdown of ODA spending on administration costs to support refugee hosting for each of the last five years for which data is available.

Robert Jenrick:

Given the complexity of factors involved in calculating ODA spend, the Home Office does not categorise data on ODA spend in a way that makes it possible to answer this question.

Details of ODA spend by the Home Office can be found on GOV.UK under the Statistics for International Development.

■ Refugees: English Language**Seema Malhotra:** [\[165258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 157640 on Refugees: English Language, if she will make an estimate of the (a) cost and (b) number of people who will use the programme.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is running a £52m competitive procurement to secure suppliers to deliver the Refugee Employability Programme. Further information, including on volumes of Service Users, cannot be released until the commercial process has completed and the service is in delivery.

More information about the Refugee Employability Programme can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugee-employability-programme/refugee-employability-programme-policy-statement>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/da2fbdec-b65d-4999-9ebf-14998fdead0b?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

■ Refugees: LGBT+ People**Cat Smith:** [\[165253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that asylum seekers who are removed to (a) Rwanda and (b) other safe third countries under the Illegal Migration Bill will not be subject to discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Robert Jenrick:

Everyone considered for relocation to a safe third country will be considered on a case-by-case basis and have access to legal advice. We would not relocate someone where it would be unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

■ Right of Abode: Hong Kong

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[165243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timeline is for granting UK right of abode status to Hong Kong military veterans and their families.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government will implement a policy to ensure Hong Kong military service veterans and their families are treated in a similar way to other non-UK service personnel who were based in Hong Kong prior to the handover. This will happen once collective agreement on this policy has been reached with Government departments written to on this proposal.

■ Travel Requirements: EEA Nationals and EU Nationals

Hilary Benn:

[\[165224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will take steps to enable EU and EEA nationals and residents under 18 to travel to the UK with their ID card using a group travel document.

Robert Jenrick:

Following the France-UK summit on 10 March 2023, the UK committed to ease the travel of school groups to the UK by making changes to documentary requirements for schoolchildren on organised trips from France. Further details will be announced in due course.

This agreement is with France and will help to strengthen and maintain educational and cultural links with our closest continental neighbour. In relation to requests for similar agreements with other European neighbours, we will keep the position under review and ensure that we continue to operate our border in the UK's best interests.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Detainees

Kate Osamor:

[\[165398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on trends in the number of people detained for that purpose.

Robert Jenrick:

An economic impact assessment will be published for the Illegal Migration Bill in due course.

■ Visas: Applications

Damien Moore:

[\[165447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to reduce the time taken to process visa applications.

Robert Jenrick:

UK Visas and Immigration are currently operating within their global customer service standards across all of the main legal migration routes for customers who make an entry clearance application from overseas.

Details of current performance against these customer service standards are updated regularly and can be found at:

[Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk).

JUSTICE**Prisoners' Release: Drugs**

Ellie Reeves: [\[165444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of prisoners who die within two weeks of release do so because of drug-related causes.

Damian Hinds:

Every drug-related death is a tragedy. Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, 65 offenders supervised by the Probation Service in England and Wales under post-release supervision, died within two weeks of release from prison. Of these, 27 died as a result of a self-inflicted drug overdose (including intentional and unintentional drug overdoses), equivalent to 41.5%. This figure excludes deaths where drugs were a contributing factor, but not the cause of death.

The apparent cause of death is as reported in the probation case management system, and has not been independently verified. The total number of deaths includes those with an unclassified cause of death, referring to those where the cause was unknown at the time of reporting.

As part of our up to £120m investment to tackle drug misuse, we are focusing on improving continuity of care from prison by providing prisoners with the opportunity to engage with community treatment pre-release via video calling, and recruiting Health and Justice Coordinators in every probation region to improve links between prison and local treatment services. Naloxone, a life-saving medication for those who have suffered an opiate overdose, is available in Probation Contact Centres (including Approved Premises) with staff trained to use it in an emergency.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**Buildings: Fire Prevention**

Matthew Pennycook: [\[168088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has approached Comer Group UK to sign the developer remediation contract.

Lee Rowley:

Further to the [oral statement](#) by the Secretary of State on 30 January 2023, I refer the Hon. Member to this [link](#).

■ Changing Futures Programme**Nadia Whittome:**[\[168111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department has plans to extend the Changing Futures programme beyond March 2024.

Felicity Buchan:

The Changing Futures programme is a £64 million initiative between Government and The National Lottery Community Fund, running until 2024/25. Fifteen local areas are now supporting over 1,500 of the most vulnerable adults in our communities – people experiencing combinations of mental ill health, substance misuse, homelessness, domestic abuse and contact with the criminal justice system - to change their lives for the better.

Any announcements about future plans for the programme will be made in due course.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**John McDonnell:**[\[166112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the progress made by local authorities on the implementation of voter ID requirements ahead of the May 2023 elections.

John McDonnell:[\[166113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to provide training for (a) polling station and (b) returning officers on determining the veracity of official documents and photo IDs before the elections in May 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [165270](#) on 17th March 2023.

■ Local Government and Mayors: Elections**Angela Rayner:**[\[165350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Voter Identification Evaluation Form will be required at (a) local government, (b) combined authority mayoral and (c) local authority mayoral elections after 4 May 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to the answer given [here](#), I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to schedule 1, paragraph 7 of the Elections Act.

Local Government: Elections

Mick Whitley: [R] [[165391](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data will be recorded by polling stations during the local elections in May 2023; how that data will be recorded; and whether his Department plans to report data on those elections to the House after the May local elections.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [162192](#) on 14th March 2023.

Luke Pollard: [[165394](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish how much funding was awarded to each local authority in England to promote and raise awareness of the new Voter ID rules.

Luke Pollard: [[165395](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what training is provided for (a) polling station officers and (b) returning officers on assessing the (i) veracity of official documents and (ii) authenticity of photo IDs.

Luke Pollard: [[165396](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government plans to provide additional guidance on the criteria by which a photographic ID is deemed recognisable.

Dehenna Davison:

Further to the answer given to Question UIN [124038](#) on 19th January 2023 and to the response to the [UQ on 21th February 2023](#), I refer the Hon. Member to the following publications on new burdens [funding](#), the electoral commission's polling station [handbook](#), and to the application process for a Voter Authority Certificate.

Social Rented Housing: Veterans

Charlotte Nichols: [[165467](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to disapply the local connection tests for veterans seeking social housing who are referred through Op Fortitude.

Dehenna Davison:

We introduced regulations in 2012 that prevent local authorities from applying a local connection test to disqualify serving personnel as well as those within 5 years of having left the Armed Forces. Statutory guidance is also clear that members of the regular Armed Forces, their bereaved spouses and civil partners, and seriously injured reservists, must not be disqualified for an allocation of social housing because they lack a local connection to an area.

Further statutory allocations guidance issued in June 2020 makes clear that local authorities are expected to disapply any local connection requirement from divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Cost of Living: Northern Ireland

Liz Twist: [\[904205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to support women in Northern Ireland with the cost of living crisis.

Mr Steve Baker:

We have taken decisive action to help UK households tackle increases in the cost of living. Women across Northern Ireland will benefit from our package of measures, including energy bill support and support for the most vulnerable, including an additional £900 Cost of Living Payment in 2023-24 for households on means-tested benefits.

■ Livestock: Transport

Ian Paisley: [\[904206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the movement of livestock between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Windsor Framework respects that for decades the island of Ireland has been treated as a single epidemiological unit, meaning that there have been additional requirements for the movement of livestock. These include identification requirements, health certificates and the physical inspection of animals by vets.

In 2021, technical easements were agreed with the EU to simplify livestock moving between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Defra is working closely with the livestock sector to ensure movements can continue with as little friction as possible.

■ Motor Sports: Northern Ireland

Greg Smith: [\[904203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will take steps to support a bid for a round of the World Rally Championship series to be hosted in Northern Ireland in 2024.

Mr Steve Baker:

Northern Ireland is a fantastic place to host international events, but tourism is devolved in Northern Ireland and therefore this is not something within the control of the Northern Ireland Office.

■ Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[904202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for renewable energy in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

Energy is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland, and that is why it is vital that an Executive is restored to take important decisions such as this on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**■ Broadband: Scotland****Angus Brendan MacNeil:**[\[167065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how many households in (a) Na h-Eileanan an Iar and (b) Scotland have accessed the Universal Service Obligation scheme for broadband.

Julia Lopez:

Neither Ofcom, nor BT as the broadband Universal Service Provider for Scotland provides a breakdown at a constituency level of how many premises have taken up the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO). However, Ofcom data shows that the number of potentially USO-eligible premises in Na h-Eileanan an Iar has reduced from 2,476 premises in March 2020, to 595 in October 2022, due to a combination of commercial rollouts, improved 4G Fixed Wireless Access services, government intervention and USO delivery.

As of October 2022, Ofcom Connected Nations 2022 reported that, in Scotland, there have been 110 broadband Universal Service Obligation orders resulting in 583 premises connected.

■ ICT: Innovation**Chi Onwurah:**[\[166213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 3.92 of the Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, from which Department's budget will the £900 million allocated for the exascale supercomputer come from; and if he will publish a timeframe for this expenditure.

George Freeman:

The Government will invest, subject to business case approval, in the region of £900 million to build an exascale supercomputer and to establish a new AI Research Resource, with initial investments starting this year. This will provide significant compute capacity to our AI community and provide scientists with access to cutting-edge computing power.

Further information on this expenditure and its timeframe will be provided in due course once the Government's usual business case processes for determining new programme spend conclude.

■ Innovation

Chi Onwurah:

[\[165340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the UK Science and Technology Framework published on 6 March 2023, page 10, how the Government plans to measure the success of the stated outcome of accelerated translation, commercialisation and knowledge exchange through targeted support for local innovation clusters.

George Freeman:

Strengthening clusters is a top priority for building our Innovation Nation. By September, we will publish an interactive digital tool that will map these clusters, helping us attract investment and inform future policy, including measuring the success of policy interventions in growing these clusters.

We are investing £100 million to pilot Innovation Accelerators in three city regions, helping them become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation, and the government will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach to growing successful innovation clusters. The Investment Zones programme will also catalyse some of the highest potential knowledge-intensive growth clusters.

■ Kidney Diseases: Research

Andrew Lewer:

[\[165422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the Government provided for research into kidney disease in each financial year since 2019-20; and whether she plans to increase that funding in future years.

George Freeman:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds research into the detection, prevention, treatment and underpinning biology of kidney disease, allocated primarily through the Medical Research Council (MRC). Over the period of 2019/20 to 2021/22, MRC has invested over £20 million in funding and support for kidney disease research with £7.7 million in 2019/20, £7.8 million in 2020/21 and £6.7 million in 2021/22.

UKRI funds research and innovation on a competitive basis, with individual applications being assessed by independent experts. In general, funding is not ring-fenced for specific conditions, and so an estimate for future spend on kidney disease research is unavailable.

■ Quantum Technology: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 3.95 of the Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, if he will publish the financing plans for the £2.5 billion investment in Quantum technologies, broken down by financial year and Government Department.

George Freeman:

The Department has published the National Quantum Strategy. This strategy sets out the ten-year vision for the UK to be a world leading quantum-enabled economy, building on our scientific excellence to create a thriving quantum sector. The strategy commits to establishing a new and ambitious ten-year research and innovation programme, running from 2024 to 2034 and supported by £2.5 billion in funding.

This investment demonstrates a long-term commitment to the sector. Decisions on the specific allocations of this funding will be taken in due course, in accordance with usual government spending processes.

■ Science and Technology: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[165341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to her Department's policy paper entitled The UK Science and Technology Framework, published on 6 March 2023, for what reason she plans to raise public investment in research and development outside the Greater South East by at least 40 per cent when the Government plans to double overall public investment in research and development spending.

George Freeman:

The Government is making significant strides in growing public R&D funding which will rise to £20bn per annum by 24/25, up around a third on the level in 21/22.

Domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South-East will increase by at least 40% by 2030, and over the spending review period by at least one third. That additional public funding aims to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth across the UK.

■ Space Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[\[165336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the UK Science and Technology Framework, published on 6 March 2023, for what reasons the Framework does not reference the importance of UK (a) sovereign space and (b) satellite capabilities.

George Freeman:

Space is a key domain of activity for the UK, and satellite technologies will benefit from and contribute to every area of the Science and Technology Framework published in March this year.

The Government is focussed on delivering the National Space Strategy, and the importance of space to the UK's sovereign interests was reinforced this week as part of the refresh of the Integrated Review.

The space economy is worth £16.5 billion per year to the UK, and supports more than £360 billion of wider economic activity.

Spaceflight

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[166155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when he expects the bidders' conference for the Space Flight 2 Programme to take place.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[166156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, when she plans to announce her next steps on the Spaceflight Programme.

George Freeman:

The Government is committed to becoming the leading provider of commercial small satellite launch in Europe by 2030, as set out in the National Space Strategy.

Further vertical launches are planned from Scotland as part of phase one of the Spaceflight Programme. The UK Space Agency is also currently developing phase two of the programme, which will seek to further ensure an effective UK launch capability, subject to business case approval. Further engagement with industry will proceed once approval has been secured.

STEM Subjects: Equality

Chi Onwurah: [\[165339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of including targets for increasing the diversity of the STEM workforce in the UK Science and Technology Framework.

George Freeman:

The Science and Technology Framework sets out 10 actions for the UK to become a science superpower. One action is to create an agile and responsive skills system, which delivers the skills needed in STEM and drives economic growth by 2030. The UK has a large, varied base of talent which responds to the needs of industry, academia and government, including in STEM.

There are no plans for government to introduce diversity targets for the STEM workforce. Given its breadth, this is an issue for employers and representative bodies to consider as part of their action to increase diversity.

■ Technology: Competition

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[166154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2023 to Question 161241 on Broadband, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the 90.6% figure on the international competitiveness of technology businesses in Northern Ireland.

Julia Lopez:

Gigabit-capable networks can deliver the broadband services that businesses will rely on for decades to come, paving the way for new developments in commerce, trade and society and bringing benefits including improved productivity, jobs and economic growth.

Our £5 billion Project Gigabit is about future-proofing the broadband needs for generations to come.

The most recent summary of evidence of the benefits of high-speed broadband supported through government programmes is at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/superfast-broadband-programme-synthesis-and-process-evaluation-reports-2021>. Further evaluations of the impacts of gigabit broadband will be published during the period of deployment of Project Gigabit.

■ UK Intellectual Property Office

Sarah Olney:

[\[168089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Department is responsible for the Intellectual Property Office.

Sarah Olney:

[\[168090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, which Minister has responsibility for the Intellectual Property Office.

George Freeman:

The Department for Science, Technology and Innovation is responsible for The Intellectual Property Office and the relevant minister is Viscount Camrose.

The Department and the Intellectual Property Office are both committed to supporting innovators as the UK looks to embrace the science and innovation that is at the heart of our economic plan. Intellectual property (IP) plays a key role in how businesses compete, at home and in world markets. Getting the IP framework right is central to the UK's ability to generate growth and jobs.

TRANSPORT**■ Blue Badge Scheme: Spain****Simon Lightwood:**[\[168112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Spain on reciprocity for the acceptance of Blue Badges between the UK and Spain.

Mr Richard Holden:

The recognition of disabled parking cards issued outside of Spain is at the discretion of the Spanish local parking authority and advice to travellers is that they should check locally before parking.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[167041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Table 1 of the second cycling and walking investment strategy published 6 July 2022, what double counting data error led to revisions made on 10 March 2023; and if he will make a statement.

Fabian Hamilton:[\[167042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the updates to the Second Walking and Cycling Investment Strategy made on 10 March 2023 maintain the same statutory status as the original strategy published in July 2022.

Jesse Norman:

The data error concerned one of the figures in Table One of the Strategy, and came to light as a result of internal discussions. The table in question incorrectly included £225 million of expenditure under the heading "projected investment from April 2021 to March 2025" when this funding had in fact already been accounted for in the period April 2016 to March 2021 in Table One of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament published in July 2022. This correction in no way affects the statutory status of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

■ Roads: Litter**Daisy Cooper:**[\[166371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to set National Highways key performance indicators for cleaning up litter.

Mr Richard Holden:

The second Road Investment Strategy (2020-25) includes a litter performance indicator. National Highways is committed to reporting the percentage of the Strategic Road Network on which National Highways hold litter clearance responsibility, that had no litter, refuse or detritus, or was predominately free of litter, refuse or detritus

apart from some small items in line with the Code of practice on litter and refuse published by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

We are developing the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) and continue to explore potential metrics for inclusion in RIS3 performance specification, as well as possible improvements to existing metrics such as litter. We are working to ensure that the targeted metrics in RIS3 – the Key Performance Indicators focus on the things that are most important to road users and contribute to wider government priorities. This process will involve considering the responses to the forthcoming public consultation on National Highways' Strategic Road Network Initial Report.

Alberto Costa:

[\[167160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to National Highways to tackle littering near major roads and motorways.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department for Transport supports National Highways to deliver the Road Investment Strategy, and operate, maintain, renew and enhance the Strategic Road Network. The Department provides funding to National Highways for operations and maintenance (opex) funding, which includes litter picking and clearance. As part of the second Road Investment Strategy, National Highways is committed to reporting a litter performance indicator. This metric measures the percentage of the Strategic Road Network, on which National Highways is responsible for litter clearance, that is clear of litter and refuse, or predominantly clear of litter and refuse apart from some small items. The Department holds National Highways' performance against this metric to account and assists the Office of Rail and Road to monitor National Highways.

The Department provides a link with wider Government to influence littering behaviour in a number of ways including through Government's and National Highways' Litter Strategies, supporting National Highways' policymaking, anti-littering campaigns, enforcement, and improvements to operational effectiveness and partnership working.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[167996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the extra funding announced in the Budget for expenditure on potholes is spent on road maintenance.

Mr Richard Holden:

The additional highways maintenance funding announced in the 2023 Budget will be paid to local highways authorities in line with the Government's broader approach to local government section 31 grant funding, which means that the funding will not be ring-fenced. However, the Department is allocating this funding to local highways authorities with the strong expectation that they spend it on maintaining and

improving their respective networks based upon their local knowledge, circumstances, and priorities.

TREASURY

■ **Boris Johnson**

Thangam Debonnaire:

[\[168062\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department approved the Cabinet Office's decision to award a legal services contract to Peters & Peters in relation to the Privileges Committee investigation into the Rt Hon Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

John Glen:

No, HM Treasury is not required to sign off all spending decisions made by individual departments. The authorisation of funds was agreed by the Cabinet Office and followed appropriate procurement processes.

■ **Business and Property Development: Capital Investment**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[165326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential benefits of direct government investment in (a) multi-purpose development sites and (b) businesses.

John Glen:

The Treasury has not made a general assessment on the potential benefits of direct government investment in "multi-purpose development sites" but is committed to spreading opportunity and making the UK the best place in a world to start and grow a business.

Alongside providing generous tax incentives for investment and pushing forward with regulatory reform to support the UK's high growth sectors, Spring Budget announced targeted measures to drive sustainable growth everywhere across the UK.

This includes measures to deliver change for all parts of the UK through the creation of investment zones to attract new private sector investment, support high-quality regeneration with the rollout of new Levelling Up Partnerships and further devolution to empower local leadership and decision-making.

■ **Double Taxation: San Marino**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[165234\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide a timeline for the completion of the double taxation agreement between the UK and the Republic of San Marino.

Victoria Atkins:

There are ongoing discussions between the UK and San Marino about a range of issues, including a double taxation treaty.

Double taxation treaties promote trade and investment and provide tax certainty, including for companies which gives them the confidence to invest.

■ **Drugs: Manufacturing Industries**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[165421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to encourage pharmaceutical companies to invest in the UK economy.

James Cartlidge:

At Spring Budget, the Chancellor set out how the government will re-invigorate a culture of enterprise with support for business investment and innovation, including in the pharmaceutical industry. Companies across the life sciences sector will benefit from fiscal policies included in the Budget, such as full expensing of capital expenditure, research and development (R&D) tax relief reform and tax simplification. Government is also focusing on smarter regulation to support innovation, and with £10m extra funding over the next 2 years, the MHRA will maximise its use of Brexit freedoms and accelerate patient access to treatments developed by the sector.

■ **Exports**

Nick Thomas-Symonds: [\[166286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility publication entitled Economic and fiscal outlook, published in March 2023, what the cash value is associated with the 6.6 per cent fall in exports in 2023 referenced in that document.

Andrew Griffith:

Export figures are publicly available information which can be obtained from the OBR's supplementary economy tables (Found at this link <https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>).

■ **Help to Buy Scheme: Individual Savings Accounts**

Mohammad Yasin: [\[166300\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of greater flexibility in the Help to Buy ISA scheme outside London to take account of regional house price variations.

Andrew Griffith:

While the Government keeps all aspects of savings policy under review, first-time buyers tend to buy smaller lower priced first properties. The Help to Buy: ISA's property price cap of £250,000 for properties outside London (£450,000 within London) therefore allows the Government to target support more precisely at the people the scheme is intended to help. Since its launch in 2015, the scheme has supported 531,507 property completions across the UK, with a mean property value of £176,828 compared with an average first-time buyer house price of £245,350.

Further information on the Government's home purchase support schemes can be found at: <https://www.ownyourhome.gov.uk>

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Sir Oliver Heald: **[166110]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the email of 10 October 2022 from the Rt Hon. Member for North East Hertfordshire on Clements Construction Ltd.

James Cartlidge:

A response was sent to the hon. Member on 21 March 2023.

■ **Pensioners: Taxation**

Jessica Morden: **[167067]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people of pension age in (a) Newport East constituency and (b) Wales will pay more in tax as a result of the Government's decision to implement a six-year freeze on personal allowances.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government does not publish this information.

The Government is committed to ensuring that older people are able to live with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The Personal Allowance is currently set at a level high enough to ensure that those pensioners whose sole income is the new State Pension or basic State Pension do not pay any income tax.

■ **Pensions: Taxation**

James Murray: **[168101]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department's process in estimating the costs of the policies announced in the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023 to increase the Pension Annual Allowance from £40,000 to £60,000 and the charge removal and abolishing of the Pension Lifetime Allowance, included consideration of the potential behavioural impact on (a) inheritance tax planning and (b) inheritance tax receipts.

Victoria Atkins:

Information on the costings of the abolition of the lifetime allowance and increase to the annual allowance can be found in the Policy Costings publication [Costing Document - Spring Budget 2023.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

■ Swimming Pools: Finance

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[167121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.18 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, what support his Department provides to community-run swimming pools.

James Cartlidge:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring continued public access to public swimming pools. Swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy as well as being a crucial life skill in terms of water safety. Furthermore, swimming facilities are important centres for the local community. That is why the Chancellor has announced, as part of the Spring Budget, over £60 million to safeguard public swimming pools in England as the first step to future proof the sector.

Details of the eligibility process will be published shortly, however, this fund will focus on those public swimming pool providers whose cost pressures are most acute, leaving them most vulnerable to closure. The Government intends for community and charitable trusts to be eligible to receive this funding. Sport England will manage a competitive application process and set out further detail on eligibility shortly.

This funding is on top of unprecedented levels of support provided for energy costs over the winter by the Energy Bills Relief Scheme (EBRS). From 1 April 2023 following the end of the EBRS, further support will be provided to eligible non-domestic users, including swimming pools, through the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme, which will run until 31 March 2024. This will help those locked into contracts signed before the recent substantial fall in wholesale prices manage their costs.

■ Treasury: Consultants

Angela Rayner:

[\[168049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department spent on external consultants in 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The information on how much the department has spent on consultancy will be published in the HMT annual report and accounts for the financial year 2022-23 late this summer as it has done in previous years.

■ Unpaid Taxes

James Murray:

[\[165453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 159070 on Unpaid Taxes, what the categories are of penalty data recorded on the HMRC national penalty processing system.

Victoria Atkins:

The National Penalties Processing System [NPPS] is a standalone system and is not used to record all penalties charged by HMRC across all of its compliance or wider activities. We have interpreted your request as asking for a list of the different penalty types processed via NPPS.

Currently, the penalty categories processed via NPPS are:

General Penalty types

- Inaccuracies within returns or documents
- Failure to Notify
- Deliberate Withholding of Information
- Failure to file returns on time

Counter Avoidance Penalty types

- Serial Tax Avoidance Regime
- General Anti-Avoidance Rule
- Counter avoidance Enables
- Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Schemes
- Promotion of Tax Avoidance Schemes

Offshore Penalty

- Failure to Correct

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Cost of Living Payments****Hywel Williams:**[\[168025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when each cost of living payment will be made in the 2023-24 financial year.

Mims Davies:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and is taking action to help through the Cost of Living Payments and through a wider package of support.

We will be delivering the means-tested cost of living payment of up to £900 in three separate payments. The first payment of £301 will be made from spring 2023, the second payment of £300 from autumn 2023 and the third payment of £299 from spring 2024. People on qualifying disability benefits will receive a Payment of £150 during Summer 2023 and pensioner households will receive a £300 Pension Cost of Living Payment alongside their winter fuel payment in winter 2023.

Qualifying dates for the means-tested and disability Cost of Living Payments are being set out in secondary legislation and payment dates for the vast majority of people will be announced on our dedicated page on gov.uk once the relevant regulations have been made. We have an extensive communications plan in place, including a media and digital campaign, that sets out everything customers need to know about Cost of Living Payments.

■ Employment: Chronic Illnesses and Disability

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[168041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper entitled Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published on 15 March 2023, how he will test the use of financial incentives to encourage employers to purchase occupation health services; how many employers will participate in the test; what the financial incentive will be; and where the test will be taking place.

Tom Pursglove:

Increasing access to quality occupational health (OH) services can support disabled people, and people with health conditions, to remain in, and thrive in, work, which contributes to reducing health-related inactivity.

In 'Health is Everyone's Business', the Government committed to testing a financial incentive (subsidy) for SMEs and the self-employed to understand whether the scheme can help to increase access for these groups. It was announced in the Spring Budget that this test will be expanded. User-centred design is underway with some small-scale testing of the service planned in 2023. Details of the scheme will be shared ahead of launch activity, including eligibility criteria, subsidy level and location for initial testing.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[168042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper entitled Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published on 15 March 2023, when the new advice and information service for employers to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions in the workplace will be established.

Tom Pursglove:

The DWP is developing a digital service for employers, offering quick and easy to use guidance on supporting health and disability. An early version of this is currently being publicly live-tested and is available nationally. This is a key outcome of the "Health is everyone's business" consultation (2019).

We are continuing to add features and broaden content iteratively, based on feedback from service users. This includes signposting to wider resources, including Disability Confident.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[168044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Health and Disability White Paper published 15 March 2023, what new support is being tested under the pilot Access to Work enhanced package; and how long that pilot is expected to last.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work Plus is testing a new offer for disabled people who need more support than the existing Access to Work scheme can provide, to enable people with complex disabilities, such as learning disabilities or complex autism, to move into employment. Access to Work Plus is testing two new elements: the first offers an enhanced package of personal support; and the second recognises employers who are willing to make adjustments to the workplace and/or shape the job roles. Access to Work Plus is working to change employer attitudes, encouraging them to think differently about their vacancies to help un-lock employment opportunities for disabled people. Taking a test and learn approach, we expect the test to last up to 12 months ensuring that participant numbers for a good sample size are achieved.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[168045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Health and Disability White Paper, CP 807 published on 15 March 2023, (a) what plans he has to introduce a 'tell us once' service for DWP communications and (b) when he expects to roll out that service.

Tom Pursglove:

As we set out in the White Paper, we will transform customer notifications. Once a person tells us their preference, we will be able to share that across benefits services.

Transforming customer notifications is a highly complex process that is part of our wider service modernisation, and it is important that we take the time to get it right. We will make further announcements on customer notifications in due course.

■ Employment: Mental Health Services

Dean Russell:

[\[166381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring all workplaces to have a trained mental health first aider.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for the Health and Safety (First-Aid Regulations) 1981 which require employers to provide first aid to employees who are injured or become ill at work.

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations are designed to help individuals who require immediate intervention or support where necessary until professional emergency care arrives. They already require employers to consider mental health alongside physical health when undertaking a first aid needs assessment.

Training employees in mental health first aid can have a role to play as part of a holistic approach to raising awareness of and responding to potential mental health

issues in the workplace. However, this should be risk based and informed by the employer's assessment of first aid needs. Regulatory change to prescriptively mandate mental health first aid training would not allow employers to tailor their approach to workplace mental health to meet their particular needs and would likely introduce substantial financial burden that may be unwarranted.

The Government commissioned 'Thriving at Work' review recommended, in 2017, that employers adopt a set of core mental health standards that will provide a comprehensive approach to transforming mental health in the workplace. HSE is continuing its work with the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Health and Social Care, Joint Work and Health Directorate, to help employers better support all employees to remain in and thrive at work, including those with mental ill health or wellbeing.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[168043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people received support from the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service in each of the last five financial years.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work official statistics are published annually and include figures on the number of people in receipt of an Access to Work payment(s) by element type. The table below (Table 7 in the statistics) summarises how many people received a payment for Access to Work Mental Health Support Service (MHSS) in the last five financial years.

[Access to Work statistics: April 2007 to March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2022).

FINANCIAL YEAR	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of people in receipt of an MHSS payment	2,230	3,630	5,740	7,480	8,550

■ Local Housing Allowance

Cat Smith:

[165254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of people in receipt of Local Housing Allowance who were not able to meet their housing costs in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

It is not possible to make such an estimate as data is not available on whether people meet their housing costs.

Caroline Lucas:[\[165317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156110 on Local Housing Allowance: Rents, if he will make an estimate of the number and proportion of Broad Rental Market Areas in which the LHA meets the 30th percentile of local rents.

Mims Davies:

The latest available data on the 30th percentile of local rents is for the twelve months to September 2022. At the Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) level, there is no BRMA in Great Britain where all five LHA rates meet the latest 30th percentile of local rents. Of the 960 LHA rates nationally, 45 are at or above the latest 30th percentile, equivalent to 4.7% of rates.

■ Social Security Benefits: Applications**Seema Malhotra:**[\[167122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will introduce online application portals for (a) Work Capability Assessment, (b) Attendance Allowance and (c) Personal Independence Payment.

Tom Pursglove:

- a) The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) determines entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the additional health-related amount of Universal Credit (UC). Claimants are invited to participate in a WCA as part of a claim to ESA or a declaration of restricted ability to work in UC. Claimants can apply for New Style ESA/UC through existing New Style ESA and UC online application portals via gov.uk. Additionally, we are testing a digital Work Capability Questionnaire (UC50) in UC.
- b) Online claims are currently being tested, with a very limited group of people, within Attendance Allowance with a view to this becoming more widely available in due course.
- c) The Health Transformation Programme is transforming the entire PIP service, including introducing a digital PIP service with the option to apply online. We are currently operating a small-scale test of this new apply service, taking a small number of claims to begin with before we gradually and carefully increase the number of people who can use it. We have already introduced a digital version of the PIP2 health questionnaire, which is now offered to the majority of those making a claim.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[167039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of uprating child-related benefits for individuals with disabilities in-line with inflation in the upcoming financial year.

Guy Opperman:

The Social Security Administration Act 1992 as followed by all governments since, places a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to review the rates of State Pension and benefits each year, following a review of trends in prices and earnings over the previous year.

His review ahead of 2023/34 has been completed and State Pensions and benefits will rise by 10.1% in April 2023, in line with the increase in the Consumer Prices Index in the year to September 2022.

The rate of Disability Living Allowance for children will rise by 10.1% in April 2023, increasing from between £24.45 and £156.90 to £26.90 and £172.75. The Universal Credit disabled child additions will also increase by 10.1%, from £132.89 and £414.88 to £146.31 and £456.89 respectively.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification**Rachael Maskell:**[\[166284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what changes he plans to make to welfare sanctions.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to change this policy.

■ Social Security Benefits: Lone Parents**Amy Callaghan:**[\[161421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the level of Government support for single parent families.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to a sustainable, long-term approach to tackling poverty and supporting people on lower incomes. As seen in the measures announced by the Chancellor in the Spring Statement, the Government is focused on ensuring more people are supported into the workforce so that they can seize the opportunities and positive benefits of work, including changes to the Universal Credit childcare element which will provide generous additional financial support to parents moving into work and/or increasing their working hours. From April, State Pensions and benefits including Universal Credit will increase by 10.1% in line with the Consumer Prices Index for the year to September 2022. The benefit cap levels will also be increased from April by 10.1%, ensuring capped households will see an increase in their benefit following Up-rating.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living, which is why, in addition to the £37 billion of support we have provided for cost-of-living pressures in 2022/23, we are acting now to ensure support continues throughout 2023/24.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Telephone Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[166271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls to the Future Pension Centre helpline (a) were not answered, (b) involved the caller being on hold for more than 10 minutes and (c) were terminated by the Future Pension Centre following the caller being on hold for more than 10 minutes in each of the last 12 months.

Laura Trott:

The DWP Future Pension Centre helpline has experienced unprecedented levels of contact from customers considering whether to pay voluntary National Insurance Contributions (vNICs) before the deadline.

In a normal month, the Department would receive 30,000 to 50,000 calls. In the four-week period to 26th March, the Department received more than half a million calls. In order to deal with this, additional staff have been deployed as quickly as possible and measures have been put in place to direct customers to the online version of the service at gov.uk.

See below data on the number of calls not answered. Note this is not the number of individuals who contacted the Future Pension Centre but the number of calls made, often multiple times by the same individual.

To alleviate customer concerns about meeting the deadline for paying vNICs, HM Revenue & Customs has also announced it will extend the deadline to pay these contributions until 31 July 2023.

PERIOD OF CALLS MADE TO THE FUTURE PENSION

CENTRE HELPLINE	CALLS TO HELPLINE	CALLS ANSWERED	CALLS BLOCKED*
28/02/2022 - 27/03/2022	60,106	47,626	1,693
28/03/2022 - 24/04/2022	54,474	40,739	3,691
25/04/2022 - 22/05/2022	51,009	42,123	1,725

**PERIOD OF CALLS MADE
TO THE FUTURE
PENSION**

CENTRE HELPLINE	CALLS TO HELPLINE	CALLS ANSWERED	CALLS BLOCKED*
23/05/2022 - 19/06/2022	50,049	40,180	493
20/06/2022 - 17/07/2022	53,235	40,851	864
18/07/2022 - 14/08/2022	46,392	35,793	5
15/08/2022 - 11/09/2022	44,606	35,614	18
12/09/2022 - 09/10/2022	41,263	32,636	2
10/10/2022 - 06/11/2022	88,884	39,053	29,644
07/11/2022 - 04/12/2022	63,500	40,902	4,947
05/12/2022 - 01/01/2023	36,452	25,589	999
02/01/2023 - 29/01/2023	202,996	41,508	128,885
30/01/2023 - 26/02/2023	516,861	45,613	442,845

*'Calls Blocked' refers to the instances when DWP does not allow the call to enter the call waiting queue and the line cuts off.

It is not possible to respond to elements b & c of the question as this information is only available at disproportionate cost to the Department for Work & Pensions, as the Department does not have a business requirement for this information to be retained.

The Management Information used has been taken from the same operational source data systems as our published administrative data. However, as this Management Information is not a recognised National or Official Statistic, it has not been subjected to the same level of Quality Assurance. As a result, these figures should be treated with caution.

■ Universal Credit

Angela Crawley: [\[166268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on Universal Credit assessment periods.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to change the assessment period and payment structure of Universal Credit.

■ Universal Credit: Applications

Seema Malhotra: [\[166243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of current Universal Credit claimants completed the non-mandatory self-declared diversity fields in their application in the last 12 months.

Guy Opperman:

The completion rate of all non-mandatory self-declared diversity fields for Universal Credit applications is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit: Children

Angela Crawley: [\[166269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making both parents in a joint custody agreement eligible for the Universal Credit child element for that child.

Guy Opperman:

No such assessment has been made.

DWP does not hold information on custody arrangements between all parents claiming benefits.

Kim Johnson: [\[166382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the number of households with children aged between eight and eighteen years old that are in receipt of Universal Credit and are earning at or above £40k per year.

Guy Opperman:

The latest available data, for December 2022, show there are approximately 8,500 households on UC that have total net earnings of £3,333 per assessment period

which equates to annual net earnings at or above £40,000 and have children aged between eight and eighteen years old.

■ **Universal Credit: Disqualification**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[167123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the reasons were for the overturning on appeal of Universal Credit sanctions in each month of the last year.

Tom Pursglove:

The information requested on the reasons for overturning Universal Credit appeals is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Trade Update: UK-Gulf Cooperation Council FTA**

Minister for International Trade (Nigel Huddleston):

[\[HCWS663\]](#)

The third round of negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between the UK and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) took place between 12 and 16 March.

The round was hosted by GCC in Riyadh and held in a hybrid fashion. A number of UK negotiators from across the Government travelled to Riyadh for in-person discussions and others attended virtually.

Draft treaty text was advanced across the majority of chapters. Technical discussions were held across 13 policy areas over 30 sessions. Good progress was made and both sides remain committed to securing an ambitious, comprehensive and modern agreement fit for the 21st century.

An FTA will be a substantial economic opportunity and a significant moment in the UK-GCC relationship. Government analysis shows that, in the long run, a deal with the GCC is expected to increase trade by at least 16%, add at least £1.6 billion a year to the UK economy and contribute an additional £600 million or more to UK.

The fourth round of negotiations is expected to be hosted by the UK later this year.

His Majesty's Government remains clear that any deal we sign will be in the best interests of the British people and the United Kingdom economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations, the National Health Service and the services it provides is not on the table.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Launch of the Consultation on the Effectiveness of the Digital Economy Act 2017 Debt and Fraud Powers**

Minister of State (Alex Burghart):

[\[HCWS661\]](#)

The Minister of State, Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG, has today made the following statement:

Minister Burghart and I are pleased to announce the launch of a consultation on the effectiveness of the Digital Economy Act 2017 Debt and Fraud Powers.

The Debt and Fraud Powers, as contained in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 respectively, allow specified public authorities to disclose information for the purpose of managing and reducing debt owed to a public authority or to the Crown and combating fraud against the Public Sector.

These Powers must be reviewed, three years after their operation, for the purpose of deciding whether they should be retained, amended or repealed. As part of this Review, I am required to consult certain persons and publish a report on the Review's outcomes.

As part of this consultation, I shall engage with:

- the Information Commissioner,
- the Scottish Ministers,
- the Welsh Ministers,
- the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland,
- members of the Home Affairs Committee,
- bodies which have used the Debt and Fraud Powers of the Digital Economy Act 2017 and
- members of the Digital Economy Act Debt and Fraud Information Sharing Review Board.

The Consultation is now open and will last for a period of six weeks ending on 27th April 2023.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ The UK's International Technology Strategy

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Cleverly):

[\[HCWS660\]](#)

This is a joint statement with the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Today we have laid before the House the UK's International Technology Strategy. Technological advances bring huge opportunities for our economies and societies and how we collaborate internationally will be critical to realising the benefits of these.

The competition between authoritarian and liberal values will define how technologies shape our future. The [Integrated Review Refresh 2023](#) reiterated the central role of technology in driving growth and ensuring the security of the British people. This strategy sets out how we will work internationally to increase the UK's strategic advantage in technology, using that advantage to drive economic growth, protect our citizens' security and ensure our values of freedom and democracy thrive.

The International Technology Strategy is a cross-government strategy. It underpins how we deliver internationally the vision set out in the [UK Science and Technology Framework](#).

The strategy defines a set of principles to shape our engagement on technologies internationally - open, responsible, secure, and resilient. It sets out a framework for delivering an ambitious vision and championing our principles on the international stage. Our approach will be guided by six strategic priorities:

1. Priority technologies and data: artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, engineering biology, semiconductors, and telecommunications, alongside data as a key underpinning enabler of all technologies. We will build strategic advantage in these areas to ensure the UK is world-leading and that they develop in line with our values.
2. International partnerships for global leadership: working closely with governments, academia, and industry to support our shared growth and address global challenges.
3. Values-based governance and regulation: promoting our principles and vision for a future technology order that benefits all by working with partners and through international fora to shape technology governance.
4. Technology investment and expertise for the developing world: building capacity to bridge the technology divide and support partners to make informed choices.
5. Technology to drive the UK economy: continuing to drive UK technology exports and promote the UK as the best place for technology companies to raise capital and attract foreign direct investment.
6. Protecting our security interests: ensuring sensitive technology does not fall into hostile hands and that we retain critical technology capabilities in the UK.

To realise the ambition of this strategy, we will bolster our capabilities across the UK's overseas network so the right skills and expertise can be deployed. This will include increasing the number of Tech Envoys, increasing technology expertise across our global network, and uplifting the capability of our diplomats through training, secondments, and recruitment.

A copy of the Strategy has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and is available on gov.uk.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Cyber Security Strategy

Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Will Quince):

[\[HCWS662\]](#)

My Hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Lord Markham) has made the following written statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the Cyber Security Strategy for Health and Adult Social Care to 2030. The strategy sets out a vision to 2030 for a health and social care sector that is resilient to cyber attack. It establishes cyber security as a foundational business need to ensuring patient and service user safety. Improved cyber resilience will assure availability of services, protect valuable data, enable quicker response and recovery when attacks do occur, and increase public trust.

The health and social care sector has made good progress in recent years, by making use of the increasing cyber defence and response mechanisms at its disposal, with the sector now much better protected from untargeted attack than it was at the time of the WannaCry cyber attack in 2017. However, we still have further to go. This strategy will shape a common purpose and an approach that will be applicable across health and social care systems including for adult social care, primary care, and our critical supply chain as well as for secondary care.

Digital transformation offers huge opportunities for the sector and building cyber security into our design will be essential as we put the right technology and controls in place to realise those benefits. The five pillars in our strategy, developed collaboratively across the health and care sector, focus our approach on the most important risks to our most critical systems, while growing our cyber workforce so that we can better tackle threats in the long-term. The strategy will be supported by a national implementation plan in Summer 2023 which will detail activities and define metrics to build and measure resilience over the next two to three years.