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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

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Bridges: St Kitts and Nevis

Daniel Kawczynski:

[167069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of opportunities for British construction firms to bid for the Bridge project connecting St Kitts with Nevis.

Nigel Huddleston:

My department has a team covering the Caribbean and is in regular contact with governments and businesses about opportunities for UK firms. We are working with a number of UK companies on infrastructure projects in the region and would be delighted to discuss these opportunities with any UK exporters the Member is aware of. Please contact <mailto:DITLATAAC@fcdo.gov.uk>.

Additionally, validated infrastructure opportunities overseas are published on the Department for Business and Trade's (DBT) export opportunities portal <https://www.great.gov.uk/export-opportunities/> and UK companies can also engage DBT trade advisors in the region directly, who can provide well-informed guidance on viable long-term commercial prospects in the Caribbean.

■ British Patient Capital

Chi Onwurah:

[167104]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraph 4.114 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, how much (a) new and (b) total funding has been allocated for British Patient Capital each financial year for the next five years.

Kevin Hollinrake:

British Patient Capital (BPC) was created in 2018 following the Patient Capital Review, and allocated £2.5 billion to invest over the ten years to 2028/29. In July 2021, it was allocated a further £375m to deliver the Future Fund: Breakthrough programme and £200m to deliver the Life Sciences Investment Programme (LSIP). As at 31 March 2022, total value of all commitments and co-investments reached £1.6bn across 61 fund commitments, four co-investments from BPC's Core programme, and five Future Fund: Breakthrough deals. At Spring Budget 2023, BPC's mandate was extended until 2033/34.

■ Department for Business and Trade: Technical Assistance**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[163879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what was the cost to the public purse of (a) Official and (b) non-Official Development Assistance spending on technical assistance programming delivered by UK-based organisations in 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

In 2021, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy spent £32,039,053 in Official Development Assistance (ODA) on technical assistance delivered by UK-based organisations. This spend was through our International Climate Finance programming, from a UK wide ODA spend of £11.4bn that year. BEIS's technical assistance aims to support developing countries to raise their climate ambition to help limit global temperature rises to less than 1.5 degrees, in order to reduce the devastating impact of climate change on the world's poorest communities.

For non-Official Development Assistance spend, this information is not held centrally and it would not be proportionate to obtain this information.

■ Electronic Cigarettes**Seema Malhotra:**[\[169306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what discussions her Department has had with (a) Trading Standards and (b) the Office for Product Safety and Standards on e-cigarette manufacturer Elf Bar overfilling e-cigarette devices.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is part of the Department of Business and Trade. OPSS has discussed Elf Bar e-cigarettes with Trading Standards as part of ongoing discussions regarding the compliance of vape devices with product safety regulations. There is also ongoing work by Trading Standards and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to continue to raise awareness of non-compliant devices and, where appropriate, take enforcement action including withdrawing them from the point of sale.

Seema Malhotra:[\[169307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether (a) her Department and (b) the Office for Product Safety and Standards plan to take steps to assess the safety of vaping; and what she plans to take to ensure the safety of vaping products.

Kevin Hollinrake:

All vaping products need to comply with existing product safety regulation. Such products must be both safe and compliant with any restrictions relating to their sale. For example, this includes product safety regulations that apply to the batteries and chargers.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for implementing a number of provisions under Part 6 of the Tobacco and Related

Products Regulations 2016, with the enforcement of these provisions predominantly delivered by Trading Standards. The regulations ensure minimum standards for the safety and quality of all e-cigarettes and refill containers.

■ Import Duties

Gareth Thomas: [\[166111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of improving the transparency of the reasons given for rejecting applications for duty suspension on products where there is no domestic production in the 2021 duty suspension window; and if she will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Following the outcome of the 2021 application window, the Government contacted all applicants whose suspension applications had been rejected, providing reasons. This included applications on products where there is no domestic production.

The Government is always open to discussing rejected applications with applicants via tariffsuspensions@trade.gov.uk. All criteria and considerations relevant to the assessment of duty suspensions applications continue to be available on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-suspensions-and-tariff-quotas>.

Ahead of the 2023 application window, the Government is reviewing where improvements can be made, including in its communications.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Supply Chains

Bill Esterson: [\[167092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Answer of 16 March 2023 to Question 162170 on Manufacturing Industries: Supply Chains, whether she had discussions with the Chancellor ahead of the Spring Budget 2023 on funding for the manufacturing sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Rt. Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business and Trade has frequent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer about how to secure the best outcomes for the UK economy, including sectors such as manufacturing and its key sub-sectors like aerospace, automotive and life sciences.

■ Overseas Investment: San Marino

Andrew Rosindell: [\[165235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress she has made on an agreement on the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments between the UK and the Republic of San Marino; and if she will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government welcomes foreign investment into the UK, including from the Republic of San Marino.

At this time, the UK Government has not entered into discussions with the Republic of San Marino for the negotiation of an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement.

■ Trade

Gareth Thomas: [\[165194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department is taking steps to create a trade portal for providing information and guidance to businesses on potential trade opportunities.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) already has an offer that supports businesses to access trade opportunities. DBT runs its Export Opportunities service via great.gov.uk. There are tens of thousands of export sales leads that businesses can pitch towards. Businesses specify their product, and where they wish to export, before they are signposted to relevant opportunities. This is supported by the advice page on great.gov.uk that helps businesses find export markets and advises them on the necessary steps to export.

■ Trade Agreements: India

Bob Blackman: [\[904263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent progress her Department has made on negotiating a free trade agreement with India.

Nigel Huddleston:

I am pleased to confirm that round 8 is currently underway in India.

As you know, both nations have come to the table with the very highest of ambitions and a willingness to work together towards a mutually beneficial deal.

We are now working through substantive issues like goods market access, services, and investment, and are starting to see a way forward that works for both sides.

However, we will only sign when we have a deal that is fair, reciprocal, and ultimately in the best interests of the British people and the economy.

■ Trade Agreements: Mercosur

Andrew Selous: [\[165247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether (a) she and (b) her predecessors have had discussions with their Mercosur counterparts on the status of gold in negotiations around a UK-Mercosur trade agreement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The UK is not negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the Mercosur bloc. Neither the Secretary of State nor her predecessors have discussed the status of gold within any possible future negotiation with their Mercosur counterparts.

Mercosur countries are important partners for the UK. We are working to strengthen our trading relationships in a way which supports sustainable development, removes barriers to trade, and helps British businesses to export.

■ Trade Promotion: St Kitts and Nevis

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[167068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, when he plans to appoint a Trade Envoy to cover the territory of St Kitts & Nevis.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Department for International Trade is constantly reviewing suitable markets to identify where the appointment of a Trade Envoy can be of greatest benefit to the trade and investment aims of the UK alongside the Department's other support for exporters and investors. There are currently no plans at present to solely appoint a Trade Envoy to St Kitts & Nevis.

■ Working Hours: Health

Kirsten Oswald: [\[167152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department plans to take steps to review the health and wellbeing impact of night-time shift working; and if she will take steps to create a working group on this issue with industry stakeholders.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Working Time Regulations provide specific protections to night workers. Before someone starts working at night, they must be offered a free health assessment to see if they are fit to work nights before they become a night worker and on a regular basis after that. A record of this must be kept by the employer. Employers must also make sure that night time workers do not work more than an average of 8 hours in a 24-hour period. Employers can make collective or workforce agreements to change or exclude this limit.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Procurement

Florence Eshalomi: [\[169507\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many suppliers their Department excluded from procurement on the grounds of (a) fraud, (b) corruption and (c) other grounds under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 from 2015 to 2022.

Alex Burghart:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. To obtain the information a manual search through individual records would be required as this is not recorded centrally on departmental systems.

The grounds for the exclusion of bidders from public procurement procedures are set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. These rules set out the circumstances in which bidders must, or may, be excluded from a public procurement process.

The Procurement Bill brought forward by this Conservative Government, currently being considered by Parliament, expands the scope of misconduct which can lead to exclusion. We are also increasing the time period within which misconduct can lead to exclusion from 3 years to 5; bringing subsidiary companies into scope of exclusion; and making the rules clearer so that contracting authorities can undertake exclusions with more confidence

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon:

[\[158916\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church has made of freedom of religion and belief (a) globally and (b) in China and Hong Kong.

Andrew Selous:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given ([129832](#)) on 31st January 2023.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[\[166279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to paragraph 2.28 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, whether restraints will be placed on the use of the £100 million of funding allocated to charities.

Stuart Andrew:

As announced in the recent Spring Budget, the government will provide over £100 million of support for charities and community organisations in England. This will be targeted towards those organisations most at risk, due to increased demand from vulnerable groups and higher delivery costs, as well as providing investment in energy efficiency

Further details of both aspects of the funding, including eligibility criteria and any restraints, will be announced in due course.

■ Leisure and Swimming Pools: Energy

Rachael Maskell:

[\[166278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to paragraph 2.28 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, if she will make it her

policy to extend energy bill support for swimming pools to whole leisure centre complexes with swimming pools.

Stuart Andrew:

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

At the Budget, we announced a dedicated £63 million support package for swimming pools, which is targeted at addressing cost pressures facing public swimming pool providers. It will also help provide investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs and make facilities sustainable in the long-term.

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.

■ **Leisure and Swimming Pools: Finance**

Catherine West:

[\[166292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether the £63 million funding for swimming pools and leisure centres will be available to centres with charitable status.

Julia Lopez:

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

At the Budget, we announced a dedicated £63 million support package for swimming pools, which is targeted at addressing cost pressures facing public swimming pool providers. It will also help provide investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs and make facilities sustainable in the long-term.

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.

Munira Wilson:

[\[169424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether swimming pools and leisure centres run by (a) community groups and (b) charities will be eligible for the support fund announced for swimming pools in the Spring Budget 2023.

Munira Wilson:

[\[169425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of the support fund announced for swimming pools in the Spring Budget 2023 will be allocated to support pools and leisure centres with (a) immediate operational costs and (b) energy bills.

Stuart Andrew:

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

At the Budget, we announced a dedicated £63 million support package for swimming pools, which is targeted at addressing cost pressures facing public swimming pool providers. It will also help provide investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs and make facilities sustainable in the long-term.

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.

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[169217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 20 March 2023 on Ajax Payments Update, HCWS652, how many Ajax vehicles will comprise a deployable squadron.

Alex Chalk:

A deployable combined arms squadron will consist of 27 Ajax vehicles, a mix of all variants.

Achieving Initial Operating Capability requires 50 vehicles to be delivered in total. In addition to the 27 identified for the deployable squadron, the remaining 23 will be used by the Army to train crews and maintainers. Initial Operating Capability will be declared when a squadron is trained, equipped and ready to deploy and be sustained for six months.

■ Armed Forces: Childcare

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[169218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support service families with childcare provision.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[169219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to ensure adequate provision for early-years childcare for service families based in the UK in the same way that his Department does for provision of primary and secondary schools.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The publication of the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022 to 2032 seeks to address the needs of modern, diverse, Service families. This includes work to ensure that families are able to access appropriate, enriching and safeguarded childcare for their children.

An early success has been the launch of the Wraparound Childcare scheme which provides funding support to eligible Service families who have children aged 4 – 11; typically around £3,400 per child, per academic year, although this amount will vary dependent on location, the type of provider and the number of hours claimed. As at March 2023 there were over 6,800 children making use of this scheme.

Working with colleagues across government and through the Ministry of Defence Local Authorities Partnership groups, Defence will continue to help to identify areas where provision does not meet demand and will seek collaboratively to address these issues.

The challenges of accessing appropriate childcare are a societal issue. The government recently announced its intention to significantly expand the current entitlement to 30 hours of free childcare per week, to include children from the age of nine months through to when they start school. This expansion will be of significant benefit to Armed Forces families, as well as the general population.

■ Artillery: Procurement

John Healey:

[\[168007\]](#)

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, what proportion of the workshare for the Archer artillery system contract announced in that release will be based in the UK.

Alex Chalk:

The agreement for the purchase of artillery systems from Sweden, is for 14 Archer systems which were originally built by BAE Systems Bofors in Sweden. As these units have already been built and are being transferred from Sweden to the British Army, there is no workshare to apportion.

■ Defence Infrastructure Organisation

John Healey:

[\[169191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2023 to Question 162118 on Defence Infrastructure Organisation, what these figures are by (a) military, (b) agency staff and (c) consultants.

Alex Chalk:

Pursuant to the answer of 16 March 2023; as at 28 February 2023, there were a total of 6,142 staff employed by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation in 439 job roles, this includes Civil Servants, Military personnel, Agency Staff and Consultants.

The table below shows the number of Military, Agency Staff and Consultants (also known as contractors):

MILITARY	AGENCY STAFF	CONSULTANTS	TOTAL
194	29	28	251

Attachments:

1. [Defence Infrastructure Organisation](#) [162118 - Defence Infrastructure Organisation.docx]

■ Gurkhas: Military Alliances

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[169240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of replacing the tripartite agreement governing Gurkha terms of service with a bilateral agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Tri-Partite Agreement 1947 has not been replaced but continues to provide the formal basis for the employment of the Brigade of Gurkhas (BoG) within the British Army. Since 2007 Gurkhas have served on the same basis as the remainder of the British Army apart from specific requirements to maintain the unique position of the BoG.

The UK and Nepal share an exceptionally long and unique partnership. We are committed to deepening our strategic partnership with Nepal and delivering our shared security and prosperity interests.

■ HMS Gannet

Luke Pollard:

[\[166358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at HMS Gannet; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at RM Condor Arbroath; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[166362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at HMNB Clyde; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family accommodation and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RNAD Coulport; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at HMS Collingwood; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at HMS Excellent; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at HMS Temeraire; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at Horsea Island; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[167233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation units there are at the Institute of Naval Medicine; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at HMNB Portsmouth; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at HMS Nelson; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at Britannia Royal Naval College; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at HMS Raleigh; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RM Bickleigh; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at RM Stonehouse; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Luke Pollard: [\[169459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) service family and (b) single living accommodation units there are at The Royal Citadel, Plymouth; and how many personnel are based at that site.

Alex Chalk:

I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ Military Bases: Sales

John Healey: [\[169190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 153692 on Military Bases: Sales, how much income was received from defence estate disposals in each year between 7 November 2016 and 1 February 2023.

Alex Chalk:

Sales receipts from the disposal of surplus defence land are recorded in Financial Years and can be found in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SALES RECEIPT (MILLION)
2016-17	£25.489
2017-18	£173,449
2018-19	£79,352
2019-20	£80,423
2020-21	£104,401
2021-22	£216,218
2022-23 to date	£12,086

■ Ministry of Defence: Aviation

Emily Thornberry:

[\[169225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many overseas flights were made by ministers in his Department using non-scheduled air transport in each year from 2016 to 2022 inclusive; and on how many of these occasions were members of (a) the media and (b) business delegations included in the travelling party.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The requested information is not centrally held and could only be provided at disproportionate cost to the Department. Comprehensive details of all flights including overseas non-scheduled air transport made by Ministry of Defence Ministers, are routinely released as part of our quarterly departmental transparency returns. The latest returns can be found here:

MOD - ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings: January to March 2022 - GOV.uk

■ Ministry of Defence: Research

John Healey:

[\[168011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent on research and development in each financial year since 1997.

Alex Chalk:

The Department publishes its research and development (R&D) expenditure as part of the annual Defence Departmental Resources National Statistics release. Due to a number of methodology changes in the last twenty-five years around the classification of R&D spend, the figures are not directly comparable over the requested time period.

The values reported for the department's total gross expenditure on R&D from FY2019-20 onwards, which represent the last time the methodology was changed, can be found below.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL CONSTANT 2021-22 PRICE NET EXPENDITURE (£ MILLION)
2019-20	1,077
2020-21	1,061
2021-22	1,834

Further details around the changes in methodology are included in the Background Quality report, which accompanies the published statistics.

■ Shipbuilding

John Healey: [\[165206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he holds the position of Shipbuilding Tsar as of 14 March 2023.

Mr Ben Wallace:

Yes, I was appointed as Shipbuilding Tsar in 2019 and continue to hold this position.

■ Veterans: Compensation

Neale Hanvey: [\[162305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the current method and rate of calculation is for (a) Guaranteed Income Payment and (b) Loss of Promotions factors for veterans entitled to compensation.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Calculation of the Guaranteed Income Payment can be found in Article 24 of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) Order at the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/517/contents>

Part of the calculation includes establishing the 'base figure' consisting of multiplying the individual's relevant salary by a factor. These factors can be found in the table at Schedule 4 of the Order. Compensation for loss of promotion is included in the construction of these factors.

■ Veterans: Proof of Identity

Rosie Duffield: [\[169381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to take steps to increase the number of veteran ID cards issued to veterans in Canterbury.

Rosie Duffield:

[169383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the uptake of veteran's ID Cards.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Veterans' Recognition Scheme has a two-phase rollout. Phase one is complete; with all Service leavers since December 2018 automatically receiving a recognition card from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as part of their discharge process. As of January 2023, there have been over 62,100 HM Armed Forces Veterans' Recognition Cards issued as part of phase one

Phase two aims to extend access to the recognition card scheme to those veterans who left service before December 2018, including those residing in Canterbury. The MOD is currently developing the verification system required to enable the delivery of Phase two and is working closely with veterans and other stakeholders to make sure that the system works, before introduction into live service. We will be engaging with veterans over the coming months to participate in this testing phase. Veterans will be able to choose whether to apply for a card, however, we know that 1.85 million people in England and Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces in the 2021 Census (data from Scotland is expected soon).

The Government remains committed to delivering recognition cards to existing veterans and we aim to roll this service out later in the year.

Rosie Duffield:

[169382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the validity of veterans' ID cards as a form of identification in the May local elections.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Currently, Veterans' Recognition Cards are not on the list of approved photographic ID for use in polling stations. This list is set in secondary legislation and further legislation would be required to add the Veterans' Recognition Cards. A comprehensive list of the accepted forms of identification is available at the following link: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id>.

Consideration will be given in the future to including the Veteran's Recognition Card on the list of approved ID for use in polling stations, once the rollout of cards to pre-2018 veterans is complete. However, in the meantime, there is a wide range of different types of ID on the list, so a lack of Recognition Card should not act as a barrier to veterans being able to vote.

EDUCATION**■ Childcare: Energy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[166275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to take steps with Cabinet colleagues to support childcare providers with energy costs.

Rachael Maskell:[\[166277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to help ensure that adequate childcare is provided for parents who are night workers.

Claire Coutinho:

The government recognises the impact rising energy prices can have on businesses, the voluntary sector and public sector organisations of all sizes, including all early years settings. The energy regulator Ofgem and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are in regular contact with business groups and suppliers to understand the challenges they face and to explore ways to protect consumers and businesses.

In September 2022, the government announced unprecedented support to protect households and businesses from high energy prices. The £18 billion Energy Bill Relief Scheme is supporting millions of businesses with rising energy costs, and my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made clear this will continue until June 2023.

From June 2023 to March 2024 the introduction of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme will provide non-domestic consumers, including early years and childcare providers, with a unit discount on gas and electricity costs. The new scheme will strike a balance between supporting businesses over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets. This financial support provides long term certainty for non-domestic consumers.

In the Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children and the economy. By 2027/28, the government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion a year on free hours and early education, helping working families with their childcare costs. This represents the largest ever investment in childcare in England.

The department is committed to improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare and government funding schemes are designed to be flexible enough to support families' different situations, including parents who are night workers.

The department is closing the gap between parental leave ending and the current childcare offer for working parents, and ensuring all parents of primary-aged children can access wraparound childcare in school.

We will invest £204 million in 2023/24 to uplift the rates for existing entitlements, rising to £288 million in 2024/25, with further uplifts beyond this so that providers have the funding they need to deliver childcare entitlements.

The department is continuing to take action to maintain choice and availability for parents by attracting more people to childminding, through a start-up grant fund of up to £7.2 million over the next two years.

■ **Childcare: Pay**

Rachael Maskell: [\[166274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of levels of pay for childcare workers on recruitment and retention in the sector.

Claire Coutinho:

The majority of the early years sector is made up of private, voluntary and independent organisations who set their own rates of pay. The department acknowledges the concerns raised by the sector regarding workforce recruitment and retention, including the perceived impact of salary rates. We are working with the sector to build our understanding of the workforce situation, and how we might support providers in this area.

■ **Citizenship: Education**

Matt Vickers: [\[166396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to promote British values in schools.

Nick Gibb:

All schools have a duty to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance. Citizenship is an effective way of doing this and the Department expects teachers to reinforce these values as well as to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Through citizenship, which is a statutory subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 of the National Curriculum, pupils are taught about Parliament, the importance of voting and elections, the legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems. The subject helps to prepare pupils to play a full and active part in society and teaches them how to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh up evidence, to debate, and to make reasoned arguments. Pupils should also be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

Pupils are taught about respect and tolerance through relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is compulsory for all school-aged pupils. The statutory guidance on RSHE sets out the content to be covered for each subject, which includes teaching about treating everyone with respect regardless of their background and characteristics. Further information is available here:

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

The Department has published advice for schools on promoting these values, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental->

[british-values-through-smsc](#). Further resources have been made available through the 'Educate Against Hate' website, which can be found here: <https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool-2/>.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

■ Extended Services

Rachael Maskell: **[166283]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her Department's policy is on who should provide wraparound school-based childcare; and what steps she is taking to ensure that child-to-adult ratios in those settings are adequate.

Claire Coutinho:

The department's policy is that wraparound childcare can be provided by private or charitable companies, by school staff, or a mixture of both. Ofsted stipulate that private or charitable providers who are Ofsted registered must make sure that enough people are present at all times to ensure children's safety and welfare, which is at least one person for every 30 children. At least one of these must be the provider, manager or a member of staff and at least one person must have an appropriate first aid certificate.

Safeguarding is of paramount importance and all providers must ensure that children are kept safe at all times. Private companies providing wraparound childcare for children between the age of 5 and 8 are required by law to register on Ofsted's General Childcare Register.

Schools providing wraparound childcare, using their own staff, must adhere to the childcare safeguarding requirements set out in the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance for schools and colleges. This guidance can be accessed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2?mc_cid=485ddf377f&mc_eid=741fc3e474.

This includes ensuring that individuals employed to work in wraparound care for children up to the age of 8 are not disqualified from working in these settings under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations. Childcare disqualification is an additional requirement to the general child safeguarding arrangements provided under the Disclosure and Barring Service regime, which apply to all children.

■ Families: Government Assistance

Alex Norris: **[166331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to help ensure equal support for kinship families.

Claire Coutinho:

Kinship carers play an extremely important role in both their kin children's lives and in the Children's Social Care system.

On 2 February 2023, the department published a consultation and implementation strategy, *Stable Homes, Built on Love*, which sets out how we will achieve broad, system-wide transformation. Through this strategy the department has made a commitment to implement or explore each of the Review's recommendations on kinship care.

The department has committed to work across government to explore possible additional workplace entitlements and options for an extension of legal aid for kinship carers with a special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangement order (CAO), as well as exploring the case for mandating a financial allowance for kinship carers with SGOs and CAOs in every local authority.

In addition, we have made a commitment to invest £9 million during this Spending Review period to establish a training and support offer that all kinship carers can access if they wish to. We also announced over £45 million to begin implementing family network support packages through the Families First for Children pathfinder.

The department is also committed to publishing a national kinship care strategy by the end of 2023. This will provide an update on reform activity, such as exploring financial allowances. The strategy will set out a long-term vision for kinship care, and detail how the department can better support children and carers.

Free School Meals**Kim Johnson:**[\[166383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children in year three and above who are registered for free school meals are from households earning more than £7,400 per year.

Nick Gibb:

In 2018, the Department updated the free school meals (FSM) eligibility criteria to include the earned income threshold of £7,400, for families on Universal Credit. Generous protections were also introduced at this time so that no one would lose their entitlement during the rollout of Universal Credit. These protections were recently extended to March 2025.

The Department has not made a formal assessment of the number and proportion of children in year 3 and above who are registered for FSM and from a household earning more than £7,400 per year.

Further Education**Mr Toby Perkins:**[\[169245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 September 2022 to Question 48310 on BTEC Qualifications and T-levels, how many students aged

between 16 and 18 years old were enrolled on each (a) BTEC and (b) other Level 3 applied general qualification in the most recent year for which data is available.

Mr Toby Perkins: [169246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students aged between 16 and 18 years old completed each Level 3 applied general qualification in the most recent year for which data is available.

Mr Toby Perkins: [169247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students began but did not complete each (a) applied general qualification and (b) T Level qualification, in the most recent year for which data is available.

Robert Halfon:

The department does not routinely publish data on enrolment numbers for individual qualifications. The most recent information available about the number of students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on each BTEC course is the data provided in response to question 48310. This information is available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-09-06/48310>.

In 2021, 128,014 students were recorded as studying applied general qualifications, with a further 140,419 students studying applied general qualifications alongside one or more A or AS Level. Further information on enrolment numbers for students aged 16 to 18 is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/78565ff0-3e74-4392-bdc4-08db294a0287>.

The data for how many students aged 16 to 18 completed each Level 3 applied general qualification is available within the National Achievement Rates Tables, the most recent of which are for academic year 2018/19 and are published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-achievement-rates-tables-2018-to-2019>.

In 2020, 1,300 students enrolled on a T Level, and 1,029 students received a T Level qualification. Students who began a T Level in 2021 or 2022 are still in their first or second year of study. Information on learner completions is provided to the department from schools and colleges through the Individualised Learner Record or School Census returns by the January following each academic year. The department is currently unable to provide information on student retention or completions for 2021/22.

■ Pre-school Education: Special Educational Needs

Stephen Morgan: [166340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the amount of time it takes for a child in an early years setting to be assessed for SEND support once a nursery has identified a concern.

Claire Coutinho:

It is particularly important in the early years that there is no delay in making any necessary special educational provision. Early diagnosis of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is essential to ensuring a child is provided with the support they need throughout their education. Where a setting identifies a child as having SEND, they must work in partnership with parents to establish the support that the child needs.

The SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan sets out how an effective single national SEND and AP system will be delivered, and can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1139561/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan.pdf. This includes new national standards for identifying and meeting SEND. These new standards aim to make consistent the provision that should be made available across the country for every child and young person with SEND.

The department is funding training for up to 5,000 early years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) resulting in an accredited Level 3 Early Years SENCO qualification. The Level 3 Early Years SENCO training became available in October 2022 and will run until August 2024.

Where a setting makes special educational provision for a child with SEND, they should adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice which can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf. However, there are no specific timelines for each stage of the process.

For education, health and care (EHC) plans specifically, the whole process, from the point when an assessment is requested (or a detained person is brought to the local authority's attention) until the final EHC plan is issued, must take no more than 20 weeks.

■ Pre-school Education: T-levels**Munira Wilson:****[164017]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students have been funded by her Department to study those courses which will lose funding approval in August 2024 because their content overlaps with the early years educator specialism of the Education and Early Years T-Level in each of the last five years for which data is available.

Robert Halfon:

The department does not routinely publish enrolment data for individual qualifications. As part of the Post-16 Qualifications Review, in October 2022, the final list of qualifications which overlap with waves 1 and 2 T Levels (excluding Health and Science) was confirmed. As part of publishing the final list, the department included 2019/20 academic year enrolment data for qualifications that overlap with wave 1 and 2 T Levels (excluding Health and Science), which included the Education and

Childcare T Level. The final list can found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-that-overlap-with-t-levels>.

It shows that there are 25 such qualifications which will have their funding removed for new starts from August 2024. In 2019/20, these had just over 17,000 enrolments through 16-to-19 study programmes. This is out of nearly 2.9 million enrolments through 16-to-19 study programmes at level 3 as a whole.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Peter Gibson:

[166363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure attendance levels in school recover to pre-covid-19 pandemic levels.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is clear that being in school and ready to study is crucial to pupils' attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

The Department is focusing on supporting pupils to recover from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic through an ambitious multi year programme and almost £5 billion has been made available for education recovery. This funding for education recovery includes up to £1.5 billion on tutoring and nearly £2 billion of direct funding to schools so they can deliver evidence based interventions based on pupil needs. It also includes £400 million on teacher training opportunities, and over £800 million for additional hours in 16-19 education.

In addition, the Department has brought together an Action Alliance of lead professionals from key frontline services that support families. Members from education, health, justice, the third sector and parent organisations have collectively committed to use their roles and organisations to undertake activities to improve attendance.

The Department has also published new 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance which makes clear the importance of addressing the barriers to attendance through strong multi agency working at school, multi academy trust and Local Authority levels.

This guidance intends to ensure greater consistency in the attendance support offered to pupils and families, regardless of where they live, and emphasises the importance of providing attendance support in an earlier and more targeted way to respond to pupils' individual needs.

Peter Gibson:

[166364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support schools to increase the level of pupil attendance.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has a comprehensive attendance strategy to improve school attendance. Guidance has been published setting out how the Department expects schools, trusts and Local Authorities to work together to improve attendance. This

can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf.

The Department's guidance is clear that schools should develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance, have a clear school attendance policy and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. The guidance sets out that schools are expected to rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance, at individual and cohort level, as soon as possible so that all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. To help schools to do this, the Department has recently launched new functionality which allows mainstream schools that are sharing daily attendance data to compare attendance with other schools within their Local Authority. This can be seen under the 'compare your attendance tab' in view your education data, at: <https://viewyourdata.education.gov.uk/>. The tool will help schools to identify strengths and priorities and signpost to additional guidance and support.

The Department has employed expert attendance advisers who are playing an important role working closely with Local Authorities and a number of multi-academy trusts with higher levels of persistent absence to review their current practice and support them to develop plans to improve. The Department has also recently launched a £2.32 million attendance mentor pilot to deliver intensive one to one support to a group of persistently and severely absent pupils. The pilot will run for three years supporting a total of 1,665 pupils. The findings from this pilot should enable schools, trusts, and Local Authorities to address persistent and severe absence more effectively.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has established an alliance of national leaders from education, children's social care and other relevant services to work together to raise school attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Schools and Local Authorities can also use a range of measures to provide support for and/or sanctions against parents when their child's irregular attendance in school becomes a problem. These measures are used to reinforce parents' responsibilities and to support them in improving their child's attendance at school.

■ Relationships and Sex Education

Elliot Colburn:

[166372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 8 March 2023, Official Report, column 298, whether it is the Government's policy to retain a compulsory provision of RSHE in schools.

Nick Gibb:

It remains the Department's intention to retain compulsory provision of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) in primary and secondary schools.

As stated by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, the review of the statutory RSHE guidance, which was originally due to start in September 2023, has been

brought forward to address concerns expressed regarding the teaching and content of sex education. The first phase is underway, and the Department will start to engage stakeholders, including schools, parents, and pupils over the next few months.

■ Secondary Education

Paul Girvan:

[166310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that all Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils are taught about the culture, politics and geography of each of the UK nations as part of the national curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

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

All schools in England must offer a curriculum that is balanced and broad, which prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The National Curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The National Curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. There is plenty of scope to teach pupils about the culture, politics and geography of each of the UK nations within the National Curriculum across a range of subjects, including citizenship, geography and where else teachers and schools feel it is appropriate.

Within citizenship, pupils in secondary maintained schools in England will learn about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding. Pupils should also be taught about parliamentary democracy and the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom.

Within geography, pupils should be taught to name and locate counties and cities of the United Kingdom, geographical regions and their identifying human and physical characteristics, key topographical features and land-use patterns, and understand how some of these aspects have changed over time.

The Department has published Political Impartiality in Schools guidance to support teachers in tackling sensitive issues in the classroom in a politically impartial way. This guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools>.

Paul Girvan:

[166311]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to ensure that all Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils cover (a) the creation of the United Kingdom, (b) Acts and Treaties of Union and (c) the creation of the Union flag as part of the national curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

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

The National Curriculum is a framework setting out the content of what the Department expects schools to cover in each subject. The National Curriculum does not set out how curriculum subjects, or topics within the subjects, should be taught. There is plenty of scope to teach about the creation of the United Kingdom, the Union and the UK flag within the themes and eras of the history curriculum.

The forming of the United Kingdom can be taught as part of the Key Stage 3 theme, 'the development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509-1745' where one of the non-statutory examples is 'the Act of Union of 1707'.

The later creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, as well as its flag, as a result of the Acts of Union in 1800 could be taught as part of the theme, 'ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901'.

■ Training**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[169180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to streamline the process of becoming a training provider; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Laurence Robertson:[\[169181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase the number of training providers in (a) Gloucestershire and (b) the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Robert Halfon:

The quality and integrity of education and training provision is of paramount importance therefore we have stringent entry criteria for all of the department's skills programmes to ensure training providers are capable and experienced. The department will take opportunities to streamline processes where we can, but the department will not compromise on the need to ensure learners and employers receive high quality education and training. Devolved Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority decide how to make best use of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to meet the needs of their areas and decide which providers to contract with to deliver AEB-funded learning, and the processes used to select these providers.

The department frequently provides training providers with opportunities to access funding. Earlier this year, for instance, the department issued an invitation to tender for the delivery of adult education and training to learners aged 19 and over in non-devolved areas of England, including Gloucestershire.

Where there is a gap in provision in a specific location, due to poor quality of existing provision or an identified additional need for a particular type of provision, and this cannot be met by existing providers, the department will seek to bring in a new

training provider that meets our robust standards. We are not aware of any specific gaps in provision in Gloucestershire that cannot be met by existing providers.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Coal

Jim Shannon:

[\[166226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of support for energy bills for households that use coal as their main source of energy.

Amanda Solloway:

Households that use coal as a fuel source are eligible for the £200 Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP).

The AFP was originally announced in September 2022 as a £100 payment. This amount was based on capping the year-on-year price rises that heating oil users faced in 2022, compared to 2021 at 130%. Internal analysis indicates that the price of coal had risen by an amount lower than 130% so the benefit is fair to coal users.

In November 2022, the Government doubled the AFP to £200 in recognition of the cost-of-living pressures caused by these rising fuel costs.

■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme

Bill Esterson:

[\[169257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the maximum level for discount under the non-domestic energy bill discount scheme.

Amanda Solloway:

Following an HMT-led review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, the Energy Bill Discount Scheme (EBDS) was announced on 9 January 2023. The EBDS starts on 1 April 2023, and all eligible non-domestic customers, except for those experiencing low energy costs, will automatically receive a per unit discount on their bills of up to £19.61/MW for electricity, and £6.97/MW for gas.

A higher level of support will be offered to some sectors through the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries (ETIIs) element of the EBDS. Under the ETII scheme, eligible non-domestic customers will receive a maximum discount of £89 per MWh with a price threshold of £185 per MWh for electricity and £40 per MWh with a price threshold of £99 per MWh for gas.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Dan Carden:

[\[166338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to his oral answers of 28 February to Topical Questions, Official Report, column 640, what the evidential basis is for the Government paying half of everyone's energy bills.

Amanda Solloway:

This winter the Government have paid around half of a typical household's energy bill, saving around £1,300 through the combination of the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 payments towards bills. The calculation is based on Ofgem's standard definition of an average GB household using electricity and gas, paying by direct debit and with "median" consumption which, for example, could be a 2–3-bedroom house, with 2-3 people. The Government has put in place a range of schemes to ensure that all households receive support no matter what type of house they live in or what type of energy they use.

■ Energy: Business

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[168055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to provide financial support to businesses who have entered into fixed 12 month contracts for their energy supply.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a discount on the wholesale element of gas and electricity bills to ensure that all eligible businesses, including businesses on fixed term contracts with their energy suppliers, are protected from high energy costs this winter.

Following an HMT-led review, the new Energy Bill Discount Scheme will run from April until March 2024, and will continue to provide a discount to eligible non-domestic customers, including those on fixed term contracts. Ofgem is currently undertaking a review of the non-domestic market. Their initial findings published on Tuesday 14 March demonstrated their desire to convene trade bodies and non-domestic retailers to find solutions in all parties' interests.

■ Energy: Pre-school Education

Stephen Morgan:

[\[166341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what support his Department is providing to help the private, voluntary and independent early years sector to reduce energy use through (a) insulation, (b) solar panels and (c) heat exchangers.

Graham Stuart:

The Government keeps energy efficiency support for all non-domestic organisations, including private nurseries, under review. Existing initiatives which may be applicable

include an exemption on business rates for green technology and grants under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

The Government is reviewing the additional levers that could be introduced to help improve energy efficiency of organisations, including financial support. As part of this, the Government has launched a new Energy Efficiency Taskforce to help achieve its target to reduce energy consumption from buildings and industry by 15% by 2030.

■ Great British Nuclear

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[166149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to provide further information on the role of Great British Nuclear.

Andrew Bowie:

As announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor in the Spring Budget on 15th March, the Government is launching GBN to address constraints in the nuclear market and support new nuclear builds as the government works towards net zero. GBN will enable an ambitious civil nuclear programme and ensure the UK is one of the best places in the world to invest in new nuclear. Our intention is that GBN will launch the first staged competition for Small Modular Reactors. Further details on GBN's set up, leadership and operations will be announced by the end of March.

■ Nuclear Power

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[166150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support new nuclear developers that do not require any public funding.

Andrew Bowie:

As announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Spring Budget on 15th March, the Government is launching Great British Nuclear (GBN) to address constraints in the nuclear market and support new nuclear builds as the government works towards net zero. GBN will enable an ambitious civil nuclear programme and ensure the UK is one of the best places in the world to invest in new nuclear. Our intention is that GBN will launch the first staged competition for Small Modular Reactors. Further details on GBN's set up, leadership and operations will be announced by the end of March. As the Chancellor also confirmed, subject to consultation the Government intends to include nuclear in the UK Green Taxonomy, facilitating investment into this important technology alongside renewables.

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[167201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason it is his policy that nuclear power will be classed as environmentally sustainable subject to consultation.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[167202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an impact assessment of his decision to class nuclear power as environmentally sustainable subject to consultation.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[167203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what representations he has received on the Government's proposal to class nuclear power as environmentally sustainable subject to consultation.

Andrew Bowie:

New nuclear energy is central to our goals of tackling climate change, diversifying the UK's supply, and enhancing the UK's long-term energy security and sustainable growth. In the Spring Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer stated the Government's intention to include nuclear in the UK Green Taxonomy, subject to consultation, incentivising private investment in this important technology alongside renewables. The Government will provide a further update on the taxonomy as part of its publication of the Green Finance Strategy shortly.

■ Nuclear Power: Planning Permission

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[166151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make it his policy to introduce a fast-track approvals process for applications for new nuclear developments that do not require taxpayer funding.

Andrew Bowie:

For planning approvals, the Government announced in February as part of its Nationally Significant Infrastructure Action Plan that it intends to develop a fast track consenting process to enable infrastructure developers, which include nuclear developers, to benefit from a shorter examination timeframe. Provisions to enable this are in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

■ Sizewell C Power Station: Finance

Jim Shannon: [\[166223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will make assessment of the potential merits of classifying nuclear energy as sustainable to help support private financing for Sizewell C.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government's investment in Sizewell C represents a major step forward to secure the UK's energy independence, and project development continues, towards the objective of achieving a Final Investment Decision in this Parliament, subject to relevant approvals.

In the Spring Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer stated the Government's intention to include nuclear in the UK Green Taxonomy, subject to

consultation, incentivising private investment in this important technology alongside renewables. The Government will provide a further update on the taxonomy as part of its publication of the Green Finance Strategy shortly.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[166378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many people will no longer be eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme once the eligibility criteria has been changed to require a low energy performance certificate rating.

Amanda Solloway:

Eligibility for the Warm Home Discount in England and Wales is not based on the Energy Performance Certificate rating but on the Valuation Office Agency data for the type, age and size of the property. The government does not hold data for the households who received the Warm Home Discount rebate in previous years after applying to their energy supplier under the Broader Group element of the scheme.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Deposit Return Schemes: Plastics and Tin

Kim Johnson:

[\[169434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of plastic and tin deposit return schemes; and what progress her Department has made on rolling out these schemes.

Rebecca Pow:

Deposit return schemes (DRS) are a well-established policy mechanism across Europe and globally, with well-functioning schemes achieving collection targets of 90% or higher. DEFRA published a DRS consultation impact assessment in 2021 and are currently updating this to align with final policy positions.

In January 2023 we published the government response to the 2021 consultation, setting out policy decisions and next steps for introducing the scheme (link [here](#)) including setting out that the DRS will start from 1 October 2025. We are currently drafting the legislation to enable delivery of DRS and working to appoint a DRS scheme administrator by summer 2024.

■ Dogs: Animal Breeding

Dean Russell:

[\[169483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that breeders of dogs adhere to breeding licensing conditions.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, licenced dog breeders must meet strict statutory minimum welfare standards which are enforced by local authorities who have powers to issue, refuse, vary or revoke licences. It is an offence to breach a license condition or carry on a licensable activity without a license and Local authorities are afforded powers to prosecute such cases under the 2018 Regulations. To assist local authorities in their application of the licensing regime, the Government maintains statutory guidance which they must have regard to. This aims to improve consistency in interpretation and application of the licensing regime across England.

Fast Food: Restaurants**James Wild:**[\[169473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of an (a) voluntary and (b) compulsory scheme to require drive through fast food outlets to print the car registration details of each customer's vehicle on the packaging containing their purchased items.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra does not intend to carry out a formal assessment of the potential merits of requiring drive through fast food outlets to implement a vehicle registration number printing system for packaging. We have concerns that the additional burden this would place on businesses and those responsible for enforcement would outweigh the benefits. We support voluntary initiatives aimed at reducing litter.

In recent years we have bolstered local authority enforcement powers, such as by allowing them to issue the keeper of a vehicle, from which litter is thrown, with a civil penalty. Councils also have powers to issue Community Protection Notices which can be used to require the owner of premises, such as fast-food outlets, to take certain actions to tackle litter created by their activities.

Furthermore, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has recently updated planning guidance to clarify the powers available to councils to ensure new hot food takeaways do not increase the impact of litter on local communities. The guidance gives councils advice on what rules they can enforce when new takeaways open, such as ensuring they install more bins and anti-litter signs.

Floods: Insurance**Colum Eastwood:**[\[167264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Flood Re scheme for ensuring that residents in areas of flooding risk have access to insurance.

Rebecca Pow:

Prior to Flood Re, research found that 9% of policy holders with a prior flood claim could obtain flood insurance quotes from two or more insurers and 0% could get

quotes from five or more. Following the Scheme's launch, around 96% of households with prior flood claims can now receive quotes from five or more insurers, with most customers getting more than ten quotes. Flood Re is available via more than 85 insurance brands representing 94% of the home insurance market. More than 450,000 properties have benefitted since the scheme's launch.

The Flood Re scheme is reviewed every five years to ensure that it is efficient and effective. The first Quinquennial Review (QQR) was published by Flood Re in July 2019 and made recommendations to the Government. The next QQR is due in 2024.

■ **Plastics: Waste**

Dean Russell:

[\[169485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to support small businesses to reduce the use of single-use plastics.

Rebecca Pow:

We are taking steps to help small businesses reduce their use of single-use plastic items.

The 5p single-use carrier bag charge was introduced in England in October 2015 and has had a dramatic impact. The number of single-use plastic carrier bags sold by the main retailers has fallen from 7.6 billion in 2014, to 197 million in 2021/2022, a reduction of over 97%. To build on the success of the charge so far and to create a level playing field for all large and small businesses alike, we increased the charge from 5p to 10p and extended it to all retailers from 21 May 2021.

We recently announced measures to ban the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery, and balloon sticks, and expanded and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers, including cups from October 2023. This ban will apply to all businesses including small businesses.

■ **Pollution: River Tees**

Andy McDonald:

[\[161303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 13 of the report by the Chief Executive of the South Tees Development Corporation, published on 16 December 2021, whether she has had recent discussions with the South Tees Development Corporation on the potential impact of the the excavations of quayside at South Bank Quay Phase One on levels of contamination in the River Tees in the period between 18 August 2021 and 16 December 2021.

Mark Spencer:

Defra Ministers have had a number of meetings with those who live and work in the area, including representative of the South Tees Development Corporation. The independent Crustacean Mortality Expert Panel (CMEP) published its report in January 2023 and it is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/panel-of-independent-experts-publish-findings-into-crab-deaths>. In their independent

investigation, the CMEP assessed land-based sources of contaminants as potential factors in the unusual crustacean mortality event along the north-east coast of England in 2021 and 2022. The panel concluded that a novel pathogen was about as likely as not to have caused the crustacean mortality.

■ Sewage: Waste Disposal

Tim Farron:

[\[162147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many times each water company breached their storm overflow permits in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Rebecca Pow:

National Compliance Assessment Database (NCAD) data for breaches of storm overflow permits in 2020/21/22:

Water Company	2020		2021		2022	
	all breaches	overflow conditions	all breaches	overflow conditions	all breaches	overflow conditions
Anglian Water	39	22	10	6	36	8
Northumbrian Water	63	53	15	13	27	4
Severn Trent	84	51	21	17	50	12
South West Water	148	58	37	22	42	11
Southern Water Services	81	29	77	52	195	67
Thames Water	56	36	29	23	51	33
United Utilities	95	79	40	35	52	21
Wessex Water	106	69	9	7	39	15
Yorkshire Water	169	66	35	23	62	23
TOTAL	841	463	273	198	554	194

- The data includes breaches for all permits with a storm overflow condition: network storm overflows; sewage pumping station; sewage treatment works storm overflows; and sewage treatment works storm tank discharges.

- All breaches refers to all permit conditions recorded under the assessed activities in bullet point 1, including breaches for general management, telemetry, nature of discharge, access to sample point etc.
- Overflow Conditions only includes breaches or potential breaches in relation to unauthorised discharges linked to rainfall conditions, i.e. discharges which may have occurred not due to rainfall or snowmelt.
- The 2020 numbers are higher because trial data analysis carried out by the Environment Agency last year identified more breaches.
- We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, we will not hesitate to hold companies to account. Since 2015, the Environment Agency have concluded 58 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies securing fines of over £142m. We recently announced water companies will face higher penalties that are quicker and easier to enforce.

■ **Water Companies: Fines**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[167214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact of financial civil penalties on water companies' compliance levels.

Rebecca Pow:

As monopoly service providers it is important that water companies are held to account on poor performance and drive improvements that benefit customers and the environment. The Government believes that financial incentives reinforced by a strong regulatory framework do make a positive impact on water company compliance.

During the 2019 price review (PR19), Ofwat set specific performance targets for water companies. In November 2022, Ofwat announced financial penalties of £132 million applying to 11 water companies, as a result of underperformance in areas such as water supply interruptions, pollution incidents and internal sewer flooding. This money will rightly be returned to customers through water bills in 2023-24.

Additionally, where companies have failed to meet their statutory or licence obligations, regulators can take more formal enforcement action.

The Government will launch a consultation on strengthening environmental civil sanctions in spring 2023.

■ **Water: Pollution**

Tim Farron:

[\[166168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an estimate of the number of serious water quality pollution incidents that have occurred, broken down by each water company in (a) 2020, (b) 2021, (c) 2022 and (d) 2023 to date.

Rebecca Pow:

The EA publish water company performance reports as part of the Environmental Performance Assessment annually, this shows the number of water pollution incidents for each water company. The data for [2020](#) and [2021](#) can be found online. The data for 2022 will be published in July 2023.

We will not let companies get away with illegal activity and where breaches are found, we will not hesitate to hold companies to account. Since 2015, the Environment Agency have concluded 58 prosecutions against water and sewerage companies securing fines of over £142m. We recently announced water companies will face higher penalties that are quicker and easier to enforce.

■ Whisky: Northern Ireland**Ian Paisley:**[\[904259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make representations to her US counterpart on the potential merits of granting whiskey from Northern Ireland the same level of distinctive product protection as afforded to Scotch whisky in that country.

Mark Spencer:

The UK Government fully recognises the importance of Irish Whiskey to the Northern Ireland economy, and we welcome the recent rise in exports of Irish Whiskey to the United States. We are fully supportive of attempts by the industry to strengthen the protection of Irish Whiskey in US federal law and will ask the US Government to pursue this to align with protection afforded already to Scotch Whisky.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Abdulhadi al-Khawaja****Kenny MacAskill:**[\[169491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to his Bahraini counterpart on Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja's right to receive timely and adequate medical care.

David Rutley:

Our close and long-standing ties with Bahrain allow UK Ministers and senior officials to raise sensitive human rights issues, including individual cases, regularly, privately and effectively. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad raised a range of human rights topics during his visit to Bahrain on Sunday 12 February, including the individual case mentioned. We encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

■ Afghanistan: Hazara**Jim Shannon:**[\[166228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of potentials threats posed to Hazara Muslims in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious and ethnic minorities, including Shia Muslims and Hazara communities. We are working with international partners to ensure credible monitoring to hold to account those responsible for human rights abuses. On 7 October 2022, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate. His recent report to the Human Rights Council included an assessment of the violence and threats against religious minorities and the situation for Hazara communities. On 8 December, the Minister for South Asia, Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon, met representatives from Hazara community groups.

■ Afghanistan: Religious Freedom**Jim Shannon:**[\[166227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the extent of freedom of religious belief in Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

Since the Taliban took control, the marginalisation of religious minorities has increased. Religious minorities are often victims of targeted attacks. FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious minorities. We are working with international partners to ensure credible monitoring to hold those responsible for human rights abuses to account. On 7 October 2022, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate. His recent report to the Human Rights Council included an assessment of the violence and threats against religious minorities.

■ Bahrain: Human Rights**Kenny MacAskil:**[\[169489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 161427 on Bahrain: Demonstrations, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the complaint made by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy to relevant oversight bodies in Bahrain on 6 March 2023.

David Rutley:

The FCDO and others were copied into the issues raised with a number of bodies by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy on 6 March. We continue to follow human rights issues and cases within Bahrain closely and we encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

Kenny MacAskil: [\[169492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of (a) reports that Bahraini authorities arrested four people over social media posts ahead of the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and (b) the decision by the Bahraini authorities to revoke the visas of Human Rights Watch delegates to that Assembly.

David Rutley:

The FCDO is aware of the instances mentioned which are reported to have taken place around the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bahrain. We continue to encourage Bahrain to engage with the Non-Governmental Organisation community both domestically and internationally in a constructive two-way dialogue.

■ **Bahrain: Political Prisoners****Kenny MacAskil:** [\[169488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution by the Leader of the House of 22 July 2022, Official Report, column 1133, what recent steps he has taken to encourage the Government of Bahrain to return Dr al-Singace's research and release him and other political opposition leaders immediately and unconditionally.

Kenny MacAskil: [\[169493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to his Bahraini counterpart about (a) the conditions in which Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace is being detained in Kanoo Medical Centre and (b) his right to timely and adequate medical care.

David Rutley:

Our close and long-standing ties with Bahrain allow UK Ministers and senior officials to raise sensitive human rights issues, including individual cases, regularly, privately and effectively. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad raised a range of human rights topics during his visit to Bahrain on Sunday 12 February, including the individual case mentioned. We encourage those with concerns to raise them directly with the appropriate Bahraini oversight body.

■ **Bahrain: Protest****Kenny MacAskil:** [\[169490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 161427 on Bahrain: Demonstrations, what representations he plans to make to his Bahraini counterpart on the right to protest.

David Rutley:

Our close and long-standing ties with Bahrain allow UK Ministers and senior officials to raise sensitive human rights issues, including individual cases, regularly, privately

and effectively. We will continue to make such representations where necessary and appropriate.

■ **Balochistan: Human Rights**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[166239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the adherence to human rights in Balochistan.

Leo Docherty:

Pakistan is an FCDO human rights priority country. The UK regularly engages the Government of Pakistan at a senior level on the need to respect human rights and uphold the rule of law. On 30 January, Minister for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed the human rights situation with Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada.

■ **EU Law: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[\[166398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide funding for Northern Ireland institutions to hold discussions with the EU on developments in EU law relating to the Windsor Framework.

Leo Docherty:

The UK reaffirms its guarantee that the First and deputy First Minister will have a seat at the table in the UK delegation for any UK-EU Joint Committee meetings which consider matters concerning Northern Ireland - a key request from across the Northern Ireland political spectrum.

Representatives from The Executive Office attend all meetings of the Joint Consultative Working Group, and they receive the same information as UK Government Departments about new EU legislation applicable in Northern Ireland (and at the same time).

We have established new structured expert groups to allow detailed UK-EU discussion of new rules applied under the Protocol across the full range of issues, including on goods regulation, the Single Electricity Market, customs, agrifood and subsidy control - with new commitments to engage earlier and more intensively to look at the implications of new rules.

We have also agreed to establish new mechanisms for stakeholder engagement within those structures, including business and civic society groups, to ensure their expertise and insight can inform discussions about how the agreement operates in practice.

We will set out more detail on these in due course.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Aviation**Emily Thornberry:**[\[169226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many overseas flights were made by ministers in his Department using non-scheduled air transport in each year from 2016 to 2022 inclusive; and on how many of those occasions were members of (a) the media and (b) business delegations included in the travelling party.

David Rutley:

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 overseas and domestic flights are available on GOV.UK. Foreign travel is a vital part of diplomacy. It is in the national interest that the Foreign Secretary, and other Ministers travel abroad to pursue UK interests, developing international relationships through closer economic, security and development ties. This has been the case under successive administrations of all parties.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Procurement**Florence Eshalomi:**[\[169510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many suppliers their Department excluded from procurement on the grounds of (a) fraud, (b) corruption and (c) other grounds under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 from 2015 to 2022.

David Rutley:

The grounds for the exclusion of bidders from public procurement procedures are set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. These rules set out the circumstances in which bidders must, or may, be excluded from a public procurement process. The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. To obtain the information a manual search through individual records would be required as this is not recorded centrally on departmental systems.

Gender: Equality**Chris Law:**[\[167149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it his Department's policy that 80 per cent of Official Development Assistance expenditure will include gender equality as a (a) significant focus measured as Gender Equality Marker 1 or (b) principal focus measured as Gender Equality Marker 2.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO's new International Women and Girls Strategy commits to at least 80 percent of FCDO's bilateral aid programmes having a focus on gender equality by 2030, using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality markers, marked as significant (1) or principal (2).

Chris Law:

[\[167150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what percentage of Official Development Assistance is spent on programmes with a (a) significant focus on gender equality measured as Gender Equality Marker 1 and (b) principal focus on gender equality measured as Gender Equality Marker 2 in financial year 2022-23.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We do not have this official data for financial year 2022-23, due to the reporting times on Official Development Assistance statistics to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). The latest data, for 2021, sourced from the Statistics for International Development and OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, indicates that 49 percent of FCDO bilateral programmes were marked with the Significant (1) OECD DAC Gender Policy Marker, and 10 percent were marked as Principal (2).

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[167054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date he last discussed UK involvement in the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace with his American counterparts.

David Rutley:

I [Minister Rutley] refer the honourable member to the comments made by my noble colleague, Lord Goldsmith in the House of Lords on 7 March. The UK government remains in close contact with the US Government about the US Middle East Partnership for Peace Act and how existing peace-building projects and funding can better support the goals of this Act. UK officials last met US counterparts to discuss the fund on 24 February. We share the objective of advancing economic, social, and political connections, and peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. We stand ready to collaborate and coordinate further, including regarding the fund's advisory board, as additional information about its plans and priorities become available.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[167056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 14 March 2023 on Israel and Palestine, Official Report, column 672, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using alternatives to the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace to ensure the most effective use of funding allocated towards people-to-people links.

David Rutley:

There is already a range of UK aid-funded development programming in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, outside of what the UK may do in the future with this fund, which works to preserve the prospect of a negotiated two-state solution. It supports stability and the development of a capable and accountable Palestinian Authority that can act as an effective partner for peace with Israel.

■ **Mubarak Bala****Jim Shannon:**[\[166231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Nigeria on Mubarak Bala.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK Government continues to raise Mr Bala's case with the Nigerian authorities, most recently with the Kano State Government on 19 January. In the UK, officials remain in communication with the Humanists Society and received an update on Mr Bala's case from them on 1 February. The right of individuals to express opinions, including expressing their non-belief, is essential to a free and open society. Dialogue on human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, will remain an important part of the UK's partnership with Nigeria under the future administration.

■ **Myanmar****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[167193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support the people of Myanmar.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Since the coup in Myanmar, the UK has provided £100 million to support those in need of humanitarian assistance, to deliver healthcare and education for the most vulnerable, and to protect civic space. On 31st January we announced our fourteenth tranche of sanctions, targeting companies and individuals who are responsible for supplying aviation fuel to the Myanmar Air Force. On 21 December 2022 the UN Security Council passed the first ever resolution, which was led by the UK, on the situation in Myanmar.

■ **Nigeria: Abduction****Jim Shannon:**[\[166230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Nigeria on the kidnapping of Christians in Kaduna State.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Nigeria has experienced an increase in conflict since 2019. I [Minister Mitchell] discussed this challenge with Nigeria's leading presidential candidates in December and January. This included a discussion about insecurity with the now president-

elect, who was joined by the incumbent Governor of Kaduna. To address kidnappings and their impact on Nigeria's ability to fulfil its constitutional commitment to Freedom of Religion or Belief, our UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership includes training to develop the Nigerian police and military forces' anti-kidnap capacity. We will continue to work with the Nigerian government and local partners to address the root causes and impacts of violence against civilians, including kidnappings in Kaduna State.

■ Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review

George Eustice: [\[166177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps his Department has taken to progress the outstanding elements of recommendation 4 of the Truro Review following the publication of the 3-year Assessment of Implementation of the Truro Review in April 2022.

George Eustice: [\[166178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps his Department has taken to progress the outstanding elements of recommendation five of the Truro Review following the publication of the 3-year Assessment of Implementation of the Truro Review in April 2022.

George Eustice: [\[166179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps his Department has taken to progress the outstanding elements of recommendation six of the Truro Review following the publication of the 3-year Assessment of Implementation of the Truro Review in April 2022.

George Eustice: [\[166180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what further steps his Department has taken to progress the outstanding elements of recommendation 12 of the Truro Review following the publication of the 3-year Assessment of Implementation of the Truro Review in April 2022.

George Eustice: [\[166181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken steps to implement recommendation 17 of the Bishop of Truro's independent review of his Department's support for persecuted Christians in the period since the publication of the report entitled Assessment of the implementation of recommendations of Bishop of Truro's independent review of FCDO support for persecuted Christians of 15 April 2022.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We welcome the findings of the Independent Review of our work to take forward the Bishop's recommendations. We will continue to ensure that progress made is embedded and that Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is central to our wider human rights work.

Since the Review, we have hosted the International Ministerial conference on FoRB, working with the PM's Special Envoy for FoRB, and announced £500,000 of new funding to support FoRB defenders and to provide legal expertise to countries where FoRB is under pressure.

We continue to work with UN, G7, and other multilateral fora to promote FoRB and Ministers and officials regularly raise specific cases of concern. Ministers do not shy away from challenging those we believe are not meeting their obligations, whether publicly or in private.

■ Turkey: Elections

Stephen Doughty:

[\[169311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with members of civil society in Turkey on the upcoming parliamentary elections in that country.

Leo Docherty:

We are monitoring the run-up to the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey on May 14 and are in regular discussion with the Turkish electoral authorities, the government, opposition parties, civil society groups and the Turkish media. We have stressed the need for the elections to be carried out in a free and fair manner and will continue our dialogue with Turkey throughout the process.

■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement Domestic Advisory Group

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[167050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether an assessment was made of the potential merits of appointing the (a) Law Society of Scotland and (b) Faculty of Advocates as a member of the Domestic Advisory Group under the EU–UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Leo Docherty:

Members of the UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) were selected following an Expression of Interest (EoI) process in October/November 2021. At the first DAG meeting, members requested greater representation, in particular from Northern Ireland. The Government therefore reopened the EoI process between August - September 2022 to create a small number of additional places. The Law Society of Scotland and Faculty of Advocates applied at this second stage.

All applications were considered carefully, balancing the need for sectoral and geographic representation of civil society organisations, while also keeping the group small enough for all members to be able to contribute effectively. The Government will keep membership of the DAG under review.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Shropshire**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[167071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to begin construction work for the modernisation of A&E services in Shropshire.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 March 2023]: If approved nationally, plans will see the creation of a dedicated planned care site at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford and an emergency care site at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, supported with an enhanced accident and emergency Local in Telford.

The Hospitals Transformation Programme remains on track, with the intention for the Trust to submit the Outline Business Case for national assurance during summer 2023.

■ Bone Cancer: Research

Charlotte Nichols: [\[165502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding his Department has allocated to bone cancer research in the 2023-24 financial year.

Helen Whately:

The Department invests in health research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). As with other Government funders of health research, the NIHR does not allocate funding for specific disease areas.

The level of research spend in a particular area, is driven by factors including scientific potential and the number and scale of successful funding applications. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including bone cancer.

It is worth noting that the NIHR has funded five research projects into bone cancer over the last three financial years, with a combined total funding value of over £5 million. The NIHR is also supporting the delivery in the health and care system for bone cancer research funded by research funding partners in the charity and public sectors.

■ Cancer

Tracey Crouch: [\[166182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Major Conditions Strategy will include preventative measures to decrease the number of cancer cases.

Tracey Crouch: [\[166183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to include a strategy for increasing the rate of cancer diagnosis in the Major Conditions Strategy.

Tracey Crouch:[\[166184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle inequalities in access to cancer treatment across (a) socio-economic, (b) regional and (c) ethnic groups.

Helen Whately:

The Major Conditions Strategy will look at the treatment and prevention of cancer, covering the patient pathway. It will look at a wide range of interventions and enablers to improve outcomes for cancer patients.

The strategy will support health and care services to diagnose individuals earlier and help them to manage their conditions better. The strategy will include a focus on multi-morbidity and improve the National Health Service's co-ordination of the treatment and care of people with multiple major conditions.

We will look at the health of people at all stages of life, from prevention through to living well with one or more major conditions. We will also include a focus on geographical and other differences in health that contribute to variations in health outcomes.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments**Tracey Crouch:**[\[166185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking steps to accelerate the adoption of innovative oncology treatments, including precision medicines.

Helen Whately:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) evaluates all new cancer medicines and aims to publish guidance on new medicines close to the point of licensing wherever possible. The NHS in England is legally required to fund all medicines NICE recommends, and cancer drugs are funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF) immediately after NICE issues positive draft guidance. The CDF also supports early patient access to the most promising new cancer medicines where there is too much uncertainty for NICE to be able to recommend routine funding. Since 2016, the CDF has supported over 88,000 patients to benefit from cancer medicines that otherwise would not have been available.

■ Care Homes: Agency Workers**Liz Kendall:**[\[165364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2023 to Question 135225 on Social Services: Agency Workers, what the value is of agency staff costs as a proportion of total staff costs in non-specialist care homes.

Helen Whately:

According to Skills for Care, 8% of all filled posts in the care sector were bank, pool, or agency in 2021/22. 7% of all filled posts in residential care and 7% in domiciliary care were bank, pool, or agency in 2021/22. In the absence of more complete data

on the number or cost of agency staff in previous years, we are unable to make a robust estimate on the annual spend on agency care workers in last 13 years.

■ **Community Diagnostic Centres: Greater London**

Mr Louie French: [\[170770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a community diagnostic centre in Sidcup.

Will Quince:

Future Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) locations are currently under review. NHS England is working with integrated care systems, diagnostic networks and primary care services to assess and determine the location and configuration of services for future CDCs, based on the needs of the local population.

■ **Defibrillators: Public Places**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[166316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of public access to defibrillators.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[166317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of removing VAT on defibrillators.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made nor any recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of removing VAT on defibrillators.

To increase access to defibrillators, the Government has announced funding of £1 million that expands the number and accessibility of automated external defibrillators in communities.

■ **Doctors: Strikes**

Dr Caroline Johnson: [\[165424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) operations, (b) clinic appointments, (c) episodes of clinical care, (d) hours of clinician time for supporting professional activities and (e) hours of clinical care were cancelled during the junior doctors strike between 13 and 15 March 2023.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 March 2023]: NHS England publish data on their website on the impact of industrial action. This sets out the number of staff absent because of industrial action, and the number of procedures and appointments rescheduled. The data is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/preparedness-for-potential-industrial-action-in-the-nhs/>

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Children and Young People**

Samantha Dixon:

[169442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) reduce the number of young people recreationally using e-cigarettes and (b) prevent young people moving from using e-cigarettes to tobacco cigarettes or other tobacco products.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government is clear that vaping should only be used to help people quit smoking. Vapes should not be used by people under 18 years old or non-smokers. Vapes are not risk-free, nicotine is highly addictive and can be harmful, and there are unanswered questions on the effects of longer-term use.

We have regulations in place to discourage underage vaping. The law protects children through restricting sales of vapes to over-18-year-olds only, limiting nicotine content, refill bottle and tank sizes, labelling requirements and through advertising restrictions.

In October 2022, we published new content on the potential risks of vaping for young people on the FRANK and Better Health websites and we have provided input to educational resources produced by partners including the PSHE Association. We are also developing a new resource pack for schools on vaping which will be made available before the end of the school year.

There is currently no evidence that young people move from using vapes to tobacco products, including cigarettes.

■ **England Infected Blood Support Scheme**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[167994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any disability has to be proved arising from infection with (a) Hepatitis C and (b) HIV from (i) blood and (ii) blood products to qualify for support from the England Infected Blood Support Scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 March 2023]: Anyone who on the balance of probabilities was infected with Hepatitis C before September 1991 through NHS Blood or Blood Products while in England, or overseas while serving in the armed forces, and has chronic Hepatitis C qualifies for Stage 1 annual support payments.

Applicants can receive increased payments through the Special Category Mechanism if their infection, its treatment or associated conditions, has a long-term negative impact on their ability to carry out daily activities, and condition has worsened, but does not qualify for Hepatitis C Stage 2 payments. Applicants can apply for Hepatitis

C Stage 2 when they have a range of conditions associated with late-stage chronic Hepatitis C infections.

Anyone who on the balance of probabilities was infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in England, or overseas if the infection occurred while serving in the armed forces, through NHS Blood or Blood Products is eligible to receive support payments. The annual support payments for all qualifying persons with HIV is the same.

Qualifying individuals are not treated differently if they received their infection through blood or blood products.

■ **Funerals: Jews**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[169210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the Jewish community's burial traditions are not interrupted by the changes to the process for the registrations of deaths which occur in the community rather than in hospital.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England lead on the operational delivery of the medical examiner system in England and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership in Wales. In relation to rapid release of the body requests, NHS England's good practice series includes how medical examiners can facilitate urgent release of a body. This is published by the lead Royal College for medical examiners the Royal College of Pathologists.

■ **HIV Infection: Health Services**

Nicola Richards:

[\[168107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown of the number of people with HIV are not retained in care by (a) NHS region, (b) Integrated Care System, (c) NHS Trust, and (d) local authority.

Neil O'Brien:

This information is not held in the format requested.

The number of people not retained in care is included in the HIV Action Plan monitoring and evaluation framework published on 1 December 2022 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hiv-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework/hiv-action-plan-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework>

The following table shows the number of people not attending care for at least 15 months in 2019 to 2021.

	2019	2020	2021
Number of people not attending care for at least 15 months	2,519	4,980	4,444

Among the 94,695 people seen for human immunodeficiency virus care between 1 October 2019 and 30 September 2020, 4,444 people were not retained in care, that is were not seen for care again for at least 15 months, by the end of 2021.

Nicola Richards: [\[168108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Action 7 of the HIV Action Plan, what barriers his Department has identified to retention in care for people living with HIV; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle those barriers.

Neil O'Brien:

The HIV Action Plan is the cornerstone of our approach to drive forward progress and achieve our ambitions to end new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmissions, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and HIV-related deaths within England by 2030. The Plan is driven forward by an Implementation Steering Group (ISG) comprised by key delivery partners, including the voluntary and community sector. To help fulfil our commitments to optimise rapid access to treatment and retention in care, we are in the process of setting up a retention and re-engagement in care task and finish (T&F) group as a subgroup of the ISG. The T&F group is chaired by NHS England and will provide advice to the ISG on actions needed to increase the number of people retained and re-engaged in care and receiving effective treatment, including addressing barriers which prevent people from accessing services. The recommendations will be considered by the ISG who will agree how best to take it forward.

■ Hospices: Costs

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[167991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of rising (a) costs, (b) energy costs and (c) staffing costs on hospices.

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[167992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of the increases in the cost of living on charitable income for hospices.

Helen Whately:

Palliative and end of life care, including hospice care, is commissioned locally by integrated care boards (ICBs) in response to the needs of their local population. Any assessment would therefore be made at a local level.

At a national level, NHS England has released £1.5 billion additional funding to ICBs to provide support for inflation, with ICBs deciding how best to distribute this funding within their systems.

■ **Housing: Older People**

Liz Kendall: [\[165363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on launching the taskforce on Older People's Housing.

Helen Whately:

The Department of Health and Social Care continues to work in partnership with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in preparation for this. The taskforce will bring together experts from across the sector to make recommendations on how we can provide greater choice, quality, and security of housing for older people. Arrangements for the taskforce are still ongoing and further details will be released in due course.

■ **Huntington's Disease: Health Services**

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[162512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to health and social care services for people with Huntington's disease.

Helen Whately:

Specialised elements of neurology care are provided through the 25 specialised neurological treatment centres across England to ensure that people with more complex health needs, including those with Huntington's disease, receive the best possible care. The NHS England Neuroscience Transformation Programme is developing a number of optimal pathways for neurology services. The transformation programme will provide integrated care systems (ICSs) with the tools, information and resources, such as ICS-level neurology data, that they will need to drive the transformation in their neurology services. In addition, the neuropsychiatry service specification is in development. When finalised, this will outline the multi-disciplinary approach to caring for patients with complex neurological conditions who require specialised assessment and mental health support.

■ **Kidney Diseases: West Midlands**

Steve McCabe: [\[166117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with chronic kidney disease in (a) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency and (b) NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board in each year since 2019.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 March 2023]: The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Life Sciences: Industry

Jim Shannon:

[\[158914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken with Cabinet colleagues to help support the life sciences industry.

Will Quince:

The Government recognises that the life sciences sector is one of our most important industries, growing the economy, establishing the United Kingdom as a science and technology superpower, and driving innovative solutions to healthcare challenges. The Government's Life Sciences Vision sets out our plan to support the life sciences industry, while the new Science and Technology framework, as well as the creation of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, demonstrates the commitment this Government has to science and innovation.

■ Lung Diseases: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[169281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what science funding his Department has allocated to the (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment of (i) Interstitial lung disease and (ii) Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

Helen Whately:

The Department has not allocated specific science funding for diagnosis and treatment of Interstitial lung disease and Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. NHS England is responsible for the commissioning of interstitial lung disease services and funds the high cost anti-fibrotic treatments which treat these diseases, including pulmonary fibrosis. Access to these treatments have recently been widened to people with non-idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis with the publication of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Technology Appraisal 747 in November 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Chronic Illnesses

Jim Shannon:

[\[166218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the mental health 10 year plan; and whether that plan will include measures to support people living with long-term conditions such as diabetes.

Helen Whately:

A joined up Major Conditions Strategy instead of a standalone mental health strategy will ensure that mental ill-health is considered alongside other physical health conditions, meaning the interactions between them are reflected in any resulting commitments. An interim report will be published in the summer.

The Strategy will tackle conditions that contribute most to morbidity and mortality across the population in England: cancers; cardiovascular disease, including stroke and diabetes; chronic respiratory diseases; dementia; mental ill health; and musculoskeletal conditions.

The Strategy will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care. Interventions set out in the Strategy will aim to alleviate pressure on the health system, as well as support the Government's objective to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce ill-health related labour market inactivity.

■ Motor Neurone Disease

Jim Shannon:

[\[165251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) males and (b) females have been diagnosed with motor neurone disease in each of the last three years.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Motor Neurone Disease: Carers

Alex Norris:

[\[166332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve support for people who care for individuals with motor neurone disease.

Helen Whately:

Local authorities are required under the Care Act 2014 to undertake a Carer's Assessment for any unpaid carer who appears to have a need for support and to meet their eligible needs on request from the carer.

Funding for respite and short breaks for unpaid carers has been included in the National Health Service contribution to the Better Care Fund (BCF) since 2015. In 2022/23, £291.7 million of BCF funding has been earmarked to provide short breaks and respite services for carers, as well as advice and support to unpaid carers.

Richard Fuller:

[\[167076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the level of awareness of motor neurone disease patients of their right to a carer's assessment; and if he will take steps to (a) identify and (b) help tackle barriers to securing a carer's assessment.

Helen Whately:

The Department has no plans to make an assessment of the level of awareness of motor neurone disease patients of their right to a carers' assessment. Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are required to undertake a Carer's Assessment for any unpaid carer who appears to have a need for support and to meet their eligible needs on request from the carer.

The Health and Care Act 2022 includes provisions for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to assess the performance of local authorities' delivery of their adult social care duties as set out in part one of the Care Act 2014, including local authorities' responsibilities to undertake an assessment of a carer's needs of support. CQC's duties will commence from April 2023.

■ NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts: Debts

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[155073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February 2023 to Question 150442 on NHS Trusts: Debts, if his Department will publish a list of each NHS trust and NHS foundation trust in financial deficit in the financial year 2021-22 and its deficit.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 7 March 2023]: The Department do not routinely publish lists of National Health Service trust and NHS foundation trusts in financial deficit. Each individual trust will report their latest financial position in their individual board papers and year-end accounts.

However, the following table shows provides a list of those trusts who reported a financial deficit at the end of 2021/22 based on the latest data made available by NHS England.

NHS PROVIDERS IN DEFICIT 2021-22	£000,000
Mid and South Essex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	111.0
The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	6,039.4
Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	2,272.7
Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	721.0
Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	6,328.2
Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	3,629.0
West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust	5,646.0
South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust	3,478.0
Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	13,179.2
Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	362.0
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	23,227.0
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust	1,438.0

NHS PROVIDERS IN DEFICIT 2021-22	£000,000
Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust	543.0
Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust	1,538.0
The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	2,858.1
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	1,356.0
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	6,834.0
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust	1,052.4
The Shrewsbury And Telford Hospital NHS Trust	10,889.5
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust	6,029.0
East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust	9,723.0
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust	1,633.0
Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust	11,424.0
North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	1.0
East London NHS Foundation Trust	1,178.1
Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust	4,577.6
Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust	4,370.0

■ NHS Trusts: Databases

Mr David Davis:

[\[160180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which NHS trusts have paused or suspended pilots of Palantir Foundry.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: These National Health Service trusts have paused pilots of Palantir Foundry:

- Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust;
- East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust;
- London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust;
- Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust;
- Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust;
- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust;
- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Foundation Trust;
- University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust; and
- University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust.

These NHS trusts have suspended pilots of Palantir Foundry:

- Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital; and
- University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust.

Mr David Davis:

[\[160182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much money from the public purse has been spent on the faster data flows pilots of Palantir Foundry to date; and if he will provide a breakdown of (a) spending on individual trusts' implementation costs and (b) payments made to (i) Palantir and (ii) consultants.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 March 2023]: The spend-to-date on the Faster Flows programme is £0.51 million. There are no additional costs to implement within trusts as the programme uses their existing resources and digital infrastructures. £0.15 million has been paid to Palantir within the spend-to-date. There have been no payments to external consultants for this pilot as it has been possible to support this development using Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) teams within the National Health Service. The costs of the internal consultants within the CSU are £0.36 million.

■ NHS: Mental Health Services

Dean Russell:

[\[169479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to provide mental health support for NHS staff.

Will Quince:

It is a priority for this Government to support the mental health and wellbeing of all National Health Service staff. NHS planning guidance for 2023/24 emphasised the need to support staff and has asked systems to refresh their 2022/23 whole system workforce plans to improve staff experience and retention through a systematic focus on all elements of the NHS People Promise.

The NHS People Plan and People Promise set out a comprehensive range of actions to strengthen health and wellbeing, equality and diversity, culture and leadership and increase opportunities for flexible working.

NHS England have developed a number of health and wellbeing initiatives which include a wellbeing guardian role, a focus on healthy working environments, empowering line managers to hold meaningful conversations with staff to discuss their wellbeing, and a comprehensive emotional and psychological health and wellbeing support package.

NHS staff can also access NHS Practitioner Health, a national support service for staff with more complex mental health needs brought about by serious issues such as trauma or addiction.

■ NHS: Procurement

Jim Shannon: [\[166234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department of the implications for its policies of the policy of weighting 10 per cent of all NHS procurement decisions on social value; and if he will make a statement.

Jim Shannon: [\[166235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to include environmental sustainability as a separate criterion in NHS procurement decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Jim Shannon: [\[166236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of environmental sustainability requirements on the ability of the NHS to meet its procurement needs for medical devices.

Will Quince:

The National Health Service has committed to reaching net zero by 2045 on all scopes of emissions. To achieve this goal, the NHS has set out the NHS Net Zero Supplier Roadmap, a series of milestones to help suppliers, which has been developed following extensive engagement with NHS staff, suppliers and their trade associations to ensure it is ambitious and realistic.

The first milestone, implemented in April 2022, builds on the Government's Procurement Policy Note 06/20 'Taking Account of Social Value in the Award of Central Government Contracts'. This requires that all NHS procurements include a minimum 10% net zero and social value weighting. Social value, when incorporated effectively, will help reduce health inequalities, drive better environmental performance, and deliver even more value from procured products and services.

The second milestone will be implemented on the 1 April 2023 and requires that for all new contracts above £5 million per annum, the NHS will require suppliers to publish a Carbon Reduction Plan for their United Kingdom Scope 1 and 2 emissions and a subset of Scope 3 emissions as a minimum. Extensive engagement with NHS

suppliers has been undertaken to ensure they are ready for these new requirements through trade bodies, supplier round tables and events, webinars, newsletters and emails.

NHS England believe this approach will promote sustainability good practice, while leading to more efficient use of supplies, low-carbon substitutions and product innovation.

■ Public Health

Sarah Owen:

[\[169503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the progress made by local authorities on the provision of public health since 2010.

Neil O'Brien:

Since 2013, local authorities have had a statutory duty on improving the health of their local population, along with responsibility for commissioning a range of public health services. Each local authority Director of Public Health must prepare an annual report on the health of the local population.

In addition, the Public Health Outcomes Framework comprises a range of indicators that can be used to assess progress on public health outcomes, including on issues that are specifically impacted by the work of local authorities. A summary assessment of overall performance against the Public Health Outcomes Framework is included in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22.

■ Refugees: Screening

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[166252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing routine screening for newly-arrived asylum seekers for antimicrobial resistant organisms.

Maria Caulfield:

The Government is committed to tackling antimicrobial resistance 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 antimicrobial resistance by 2040, and the first in a series of five-year national action plans to support the Vision is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/antimicrobial-resistance-amr-information-and-resources

Information for healthcare professionals on meeting the health needs of migrants is available in the Migrant Health Guide, which is produced by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/migrant-health-guide

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) provides guidance for healthcare professionals on managing infectious diseases in all migrants through the Migrant Health Guide. The guide provides detailed information on screening by infection type and is regularly reviewed. UKHSA also provides specific guidance on infectious diseases in the asylum seeker population, including information for testing for antimicrobial resistance in diphtheria cases is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/guidance/infectious-diseases-in-asylum-seekers-actions-for-health-professionals

■ Respiratory System: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[169280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to help improve research on (a) understanding, (b) treating and (c) diagnosing respiratory disease.

Helen Whately:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including understanding, treating and diagnosing respiratory disease.

In addition, the NIHR Health Protection Research Unit in Respiratory Infections is a research partnership between the Imperial College London and the UK Health Security Agency. The Unit specifically supports research projects across influenza, tuberculosis and other respiratory infections.

■ Social Services: Finance

Caroline Lucas:

[\[169241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the first bullet point on the executive summary on page 8 of People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform white paper published December 2021, whether at least £500 million investment in the workforce will be delivered within the three year timeframe referred to on page 7 of that document; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Department will publish a plan for how it will reform the Adult Social Care system shortly. The publication will confirm the Government's commitment to the 10-year vision set out in the People at the Heart of Care white paper. It will provide specific detail on how we will implement proposals on workforce in the white paper, including the funding, activity and milestones.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[167993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason 60 per cent disability has to be established to qualify for any payment under the Vaccine Damage Payment Act 1979; and whether he will make it his policy to bring the Act into line with the disability thresholds within the England Infected Blood Support Scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 22 March 2023]: The 60% disablement threshold used for the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) is aligned to the definition of 'severe disablement' as per the Department for Work and Pensions' Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. This is a widely accepted test of disability. In the case that an individual's application is turned down on the basis of disability threshold, there is also the option for claimants to appeal the decision and provide additional evidence. There are no plans to align the disablement threshold for the VDPS with the England Infected Blood Support Scheme.

■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Inflation

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[167997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the level of the payment made to successful claimants under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 in line with Consumer Price Inflation; and whether it is his policy to allow the value of a payment under that Act to be reduced by inflation.

Maria Caulfield:

The payment amount of the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) is routinely considered alongside wider vaccine policy, which has seen it increase from £10,000 in 1979 to the current level of £120,000. The VDPS is a one-off additional payment rather than a compensation scheme and does not preclude an individual's right to pursue legal recourse for damages. Increasing the VDPS payment amount using an inflationary mechanism is therefore not directly related as the payment is not intended or designed to cover lifetime costs associated with severe disability, such as costs of care or living.

Other Government support remains open to claimants with a disability or long-term health condition, including Statutory Sick Pay, Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Attendance Allowance, and Personal Independence Payments.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[167135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) the minutes from and (b) a list of attendees at the workshops his Department has been running ahead of negotiations on a new Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[167136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish information about the outcomes from the workshops that his Department has been running ahead of negotiations on a new Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access.

Will Quince:

The objective of the pre-negotiation workshops was to enable a mutual understanding of the impact of the current voluntary scheme upon the different organisations represented, and to discuss the potential objectives and priorities for a new voluntary scheme. The discussions in the workshops will feed into the upcoming negotiation of a successor to the 2019 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access. In order to facilitate a transparent and candid discussion, participants agreed that all contributions would be kept confidential to those who attended.

The following external organisations were invited to the workshops:

Industry bodies:

- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
- British Generic Manufacturers Association
- Ethical Medicines Industry Group
- BioIndustry Association

Patient organisations and civil society organisations:

- Cancer52
- The Blood Cancer Alliance
- The Charity Medicines Access Coalition
- National Voices
- The Patients Association
- Alzheimer's Research UK
- Anthony Nolan
- Cystic Fibrosis Trust
- Genetic Alliance UK
- The Association of Medical Research Charities
- Breast Cancer Now
- Myeloma UK
- Office of Health Economics
- King's Fund

- NHS Confederation

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Albania

Hilary Benn:

[169209]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Albanian nationals who have applied for (a) asylum, (b) refugee status and (c) protection under modern slavery legislation have been granted leave to remain in the UK by gender in each of the last five years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the [‘Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on initial decisions of all asylum applications raised in a period by nationality can be found in table Asy_D04 of the [‘asylum and resettlement detailed datasets’](#). A breakdown by gender is not available. People who successfully apply for asylum are granted refugee status or other leave.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of the workbook. the latest available data is for 2021, and data are accurate as of June 2022. Data for 2022 will be published in August 2023. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [‘Research and statistics calendar’](#).

The Home Office does not publish data on referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for potential victims of modern slavery that have been granted leave to remain in the UK.

Official statistics published by the Home Office are kept under review in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, taking into account a number of factors including user needs, as well as quality and availability of data.

■ Asylum: Lancaster and Fleetwood

Cat Smith:

[170646]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people receive Section 95 Asylum Support in Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency.

Robert Jenrick:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of supported asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets> opens in a new tab), under the document Asylum seekers in receipt of support (second edition). Data are published on a quarterly basis, with the next quarterly figures are due to be released in May 2023.

■ Cars: Crime

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[169512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle car crime in Battersea.

Chris Philp:

The Government is committed to tackling vehicle crime.

We are working closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, chaired by ACC Jennifer Sims, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime, to take forward a programme of work to prevent and reduce vehicle crime nationally. This includes training police officers on methods used to steal vehicles, encouraging vehicle owners to secure their vehicles, and working with industry to prevent theft. The Metropolitan Police Service is represented on the Working Group.

A network of vehicle crime leads has been established in every police force in England and Wales, ensuring forces share information about emerging trends in vehicle crime and are better able to tackle regional issues.

■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry

Lee Anderson:

[\[167235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, published on 20 October 2022, whether (a) police forces and (b) local authorities are recording the ethnicity of people arrested on suspicion of child sexual exploitation.

Chris Philp:

We recognise the significant work of the Inquiry over its 7 years of investigation on these important issues. We owe it to the victims and survivors to give the Inquiry's final recommendations proper time, consideration, and attention.

The Government continues to carefully consider all of the findings and each of the recommendations of the Final Report and will respond in the coming weeks.

The Government has already taken key steps to drive up data quality in policing by funding regional child sexual abuse analysts in every policing region. This includes making it mandatory from April 2022 for police forces to record demographic information, including the ethnicity of those arrested and held in custody as a result of their suspected involvement in grooming gangs.

■ China: Intelligence Services

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[169335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on reports of secret Chinese police stations operating in the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

As I said to the House in my statement on 1 November, reports of undeclared 'police stations' in the UK are of course very concerning and are taken extremely seriously.

The Government regularly assesses potential threats to the UK, and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK very seriously. As you would expect, Home Office officials work closely with the FCDO and DLUHC as well as other Government departments to ensure that the UK is a safe and welcoming place.

The Home Secretary regularly discusses issues regarding national security with her counterparts, including the Foreign Secretary.

Domestic Abuse: Victims**Sam Tarry:**[\[166389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the impact of increases in the cost of living on victims of domestic abuse.

Sam Tarry:[\[166390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of providing additional financial support for victims of violence against women and girls to help with increases in the cost of living.

Chris Philp:

Tackling violence against women and girls is a Government priority. It is unacceptable and preventable, and an issue which blights the lives of millions. The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring victims have the support they need and we are conscious that the cost of living may generate additional challenges for victims and survivors.

Our Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan invests over £230 million of cross-Government funding into tackling this crime, including over £140 million to support victims and over £81 million to tackle perpetrators. This includes trialling a £300,000 'flexible fund', that could make direct payments to domestic abuse victims.

In addition to the direct impact on victims, the Government also acknowledges the cost of living will have an impact on charitable organisations who work to support them. To help mitigate these challenges, where possible the Home Office has provided multi-year grants to support organisations to make maximum use of their funding, by providing greater stability and predictability on their budgets.

As announced in the Spring Budget, the Government will also be providing over £100 million of support for charities and community organisations in England. Further detail on this funding, including eligibility criteria, will be announced in due course.

■ Forensic Science: Finance

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[169208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her Department's policies of recent trends in the financial sustainability of major forensic science providers in England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

BlueLight Commercial works with the National Police Chief's Council and the Forensics Capability Network to manages forensic science contracts and other commercial functions in England and Wales.

The Home Office is providing funding to BlueLight Commercial and the Forensic Capability Network in 2022/23, and we fully support them in their role.

■ Home Office: Procurement

Florence Eshalomi: [\[169509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many suppliers their Department excluded from procurement on the grounds of (a) fraud, (b) corruption and (c) other grounds under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 from 2015 to 2022.

Chris Philp:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. To obtain the information a manual search through individual records would be required as this is not recorded centrally on departmental systems.

The grounds for the exclusion of bidders from public procurement procedures are set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. These rules set out the circumstances in which bidders must, or may, be excluded from a public procurement process.

The Procurement Bill brought forward by this Conservative Government, currently being considered by Parliament, expands the scope of misconduct which can lead to exclusion. We are also increasing the time period within which misconduct can lead to exclusion from 3 years to 5; bringing subsidiary companies into scope of exclusion; and making the rules clearer so that contracting authorities can undertake exclusions with more confidence.

■ Home Office: Vacancies

Jim Shannon: [\[166233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many vacancies her Department had in (a) September 2022 and (b) March 2023.

Chris Philp:

The number of vacancies is not held centrally and would require significant manual collation and manipulation of data, so could only be retrieved with disproportionate effort.

■ Home Office: Written Questions**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[169221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Question 162494 tabled by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North on 10th March 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

A response will be provided in due course.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Visas**Yvette Cooper:** [\[169212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average processing time for a Homes for Ukraine Scheme visa was in the latest period for which data is available.

Yvette Cooper: [\[169213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications under the Homes for Ukraine scheme have currently been outstanding for more than (a) one month, (b) three months and (c) six months.

Robert Jenrick:

UKVI aims to assess all Ukraine Schemes visa applications as quickly as possible and straightforward applications are processed within a matter of days. It is right, however, that visas are only issued after all necessary checks have been completed which may take longer on some cases.

UKVI have issued thousands of visas under the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The latest published figures can be found here:

[Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ Naturalisation**Patrick Grady:** [\[169331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of changing the requirement for naturalisation applicants to have been in the UK for five years before the qualifying period, in the context of people's inability for people to travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Patrick Grady: [\[169332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of changing the requirement for naturalisation applicants via the spousal route to have been in the UK for three years before the qualifying period, in the context of people's inability to travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Jenrick:

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 introduced the power to allow the Secretary of State to waive the requirement for an applicant to be in the UK at the start of the residential qualifying period for naturalisation. Published guidance sets out when discretion would normally be exercised and covers absence due to the pandemic. Guidance also makes it clear that we would apply the same approach to extended period of absences from the UK due to covid restrictions.

Offences against Children**Alun Cairns:**[\[166204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse entitled Child protection in religious organisations and settings, published in September 2021, if she will take steps to implement the recommendations of that report.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains firmly committed to tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and has engaged constructively with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse throughout the course of its seven years of investigation.

The recommendations in the religious organisations and settings report fall within the policy remit of the Department for Education, and I continue to work closely with my ministerial colleagues on these important issues.

We are currently carefully considering the Inquiry's Final Report and I recognise the significant milestone this report represents in our wider whole-of-system efforts to combat this horrific crime. The strength and bravery of all of the victims and survivors who came forward to share their stories cannot be understated. And I am committed to working across government to prepare the Government response to the final 20 recommendations which will be published in the coming weeks.

We remain committed to confronting and combatting this horrific crime wherever and whenever it occurs and will use every lever available to us to keep children safe, and provide support to victims and survivors to ensure they receive the support they need to help to rebuild their lives.

Police: Vetting**Chi Onwurah:**[\[169282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2023 to Question 140163 on Police: Vetting, how many and what proportion of serving and retired police officers and staff are (a) enrolled on the Police Elimination Database and (b) have been identified and convicted of criminal offences in the last five years as a result of Police Elimination Database searches; and if he will provide a breakdown of the offences for which they were convicted.

Chris Philp:

Police vetting is carried out by forces in line with the College of Policing's code of practice on vetting and authorised professional practice (APP) on vetting. Information and intelligence held on and in relation to police databases, including the Police Elimination Database, is a matter for individual police forces.

To help identify members of the police workforce who may warrant investigation due to allegations or intelligence, the National Police Chiefs' Council has asked all forces to check their officers and staff against the Police National Database (PND). Further information is set out on the NPCC's website:

<https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/all-police-staff-records-to-be-checked-for-allegations-and-intelligence-by-march>

■ Safer Streets Fund: Battersea

Marsha De Cordova: [\[169513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, (a) how many organisations in Battersea bid for the Safer Streets Fund and (b) how much of the Safer Streets Fund has been allocated to Battersea.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[169514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to increase funding for the Safer Streets Fund.

Chris Philp:

The Safer Streets Fund is intended to cut crime and the harm it causes. Everyone in this country should have the security and confidence that comes from a safe street and a safe home. Since the Fund launched in 2020, we have invested £120 million through four rounds supporting 270 projects across England and Wales.

Although there have been no schemes in Battersea specifically, £3.2 million has been awarded through all rounds of the Safer Streets Fund to local projects across London to prevent crime through measures such as improved street lighting, CCTV and educational campaigns to change behaviours and attitudes.

This includes just over £1 million in investment through Round Four for projects targeting neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls and anti-social behaviour.

Decisions on the geographical coverage of London funding bids submitted to the Safer Streets is matter for the Mayor of London.

We intend to set out our plans for future rounds of Safer Streets in the near future.

■ UK Border Force: Finance

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[169216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding her Department allocated to Border Force Maritime Command in each of the last five years.

Robert Jenrick:

The information requested could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Border Force does not hold this data in an easily accessible format.

The Home Office annual report and accounts can be found at GOV.UK:

[HO annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115222/2022-23-ho-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf).

■ Visits Abroad: Rwanda**Grahame Morris:****[R] [169250]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which (a) newspapers and (b) broadcasters were invited to accompany her on her visit to Rwanda in March 2023.

Robert Jenrick:

Media outlets who accompanied the Home Secretary's visit to Kigali on March 18 – 19 were BBC News, The Daily Express, The Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, GB News, Press Association, The Sun, The Times. There were also numerous outlets in the region who covered the visit.

JUSTICE**■ Coroners: Legal Representation****Steve Reed:****[170629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent on legal representation at inquests in each year since 2018.

Mike Freer:

The Department is unable to answer within cost as the Ministry of Justice does not hold central financial records in relation to legal representation at inquests.

■ Legal Aid Scheme**Sarah Olney:****[166298]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to provide additional support to civil legal aid firms who will not be eligible for the 15 per cent uplift in fees for criminal legal aid.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice launched a Review of Civil Legal Aid in January 2023. This wide-ranging review aims to identify evidence-based options for moving to a more sustainable system for civil legal aid.

Whilst the Review of Civil Legal Aid is taking place, we are continuing to make improvements across the sector to ensure legal aid is available to those who need it. We have recently announced expansions in housing and family legal aid, investing £23m a year to support vulnerable people needing legal assistance. For example, we

are injecting up to £10m a year into housing legal aid through the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service.

In 2021-22, the government spent £1.7 billion on legal aid, of which £813 million was spent on civil and family legal aid. Between April and June 2022, the government spent £446 million on civil and family legal aid, an increase of 16% over the same period in 2021. Full-year data for 2022-23 will not be available until June 2023.

■ Legal Profession: Technology

Julian Knight:

[\[169321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what financial steps his Department is taking to increase the (a) development and (b) use of technology in the legal sector.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice sees the growth of lawtech and innovation in the delivery of legal services as vital for the continuing success of our world-renowned legal sector. To support this, the government has awarded £3 million of funding to CodeBase and Legal Geek to continue the LawtechUK programme from April 2023-March 2025. The funding will be used to deliver a programme of activities which will:

- increase innovation and the adoption of lawtech in the delivery of UK legal services
- support the growth of the lawtech sector in the UK
- enable English and Welsh law and the UK's jurisdictions to become the foundation for emerging technologies.

LawtechUK was established in November 2019 and has helped the legal sector overcome legal, regulatory and cultural barriers to digital transformation. The Government provided £3 million of funding from November 2019 to March 2023 to deliver projects including a sandbox to help innovators fast track transformative ideas into products, educational resources, and a ground-breaking feasibility study for how technology can help small businesses resolve disputes.

■ Matrimonial Causes Act 1973

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[169244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of when the Law Commission will begin its review of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973.

Mike Freer:

The Government is in close consultation with the Law Commission and we will make an announcement shortly.

■ Offences against Children: Ukraine

Wendy Morton:

[\[166249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts on steps that could be taken within judicial systems to help support child victims of the war in Ukraine.

Mike Freer:

On 20 March, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Justice, co-hosted a Justice Ministers' Conference with the Netherlands bringing together 42 countries and institutions from across the globe. Support for victims and witnesses of war crimes in Ukraine, including children, was a core theme of the Conference. Additional support for the International Criminal Court was collectively agreed. The UK announced £395,000 for the Office of the Prosecutor Trust Fund which will be earmarked for support for victims and witnesses. The Ministry of Justice is exploring further the provision of expertise, advice and training including specialist support for children.

■ Prisoners' Transfers: Open Prisons

Ellie Reeves:

[\[166302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners were transferred to open conditions in each of the last 10 years.

Damian Hinds:

The table below sets out the requested data for 2021 and 2022 in relation to Inter Prison Transfers (IPTs) to open conditions under the Generation 4 Prisoner Escort & Custody Services (PECS) contract, which came into effect in August 2020.

The previous contract was structured in a different way, and there is no means of obtaining comparable data for earlier years.

Open conditions are an important means of furthering the rehabilitation of offenders, especially those who have spent many years in closed conditions.

Those held in open jails must abide by stringent conditions and we do not hesitate to move them back to tougher, closed jails if they breach the rules.

CALENDAR YEAR	TOTAL PRISONERS TRANSFERRED TO OPEN PRISONS (IPTs)	% OF MOVES TO OPEN PRISONS VS OVERALL IPTS
2021	50191	8.73%
2022	56598	8.16%

■ Undocumented Workers: Convictions

Nadia Whittome: [\[169433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been convicted of the offence of illegal working since that offence was introduced under the 2016 Immigration Act.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on the number of convictions between 2017 and 2021 in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2021](#).

Information on the number of people convicted prior to 2017 can be found in the [Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool](#), however, there are no convictions for illegal working in this period.

■ War Crimes: Ukraine

Jo Gideon: [\[167251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take at the meeting of international justice ministers on 20 March to help ensure (a) practical and (b) financial support to bring to trial perpetrators of alleged war crimes against children in Ukraine.

Jo Gideon: [\[167252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take at the meeting of international justice ministers on 20 March to help ensure (a) under 18-year-olds, where safe and appropriate, and (b) other survivors are represented in discussions about the process for prosecuting war crimes in Ukraine.

Jo Gideon: [\[167253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take at the meeting of international justice ministers on 20 March to help ensure that the financial support committed by States for the International Criminal Court investigation includes dedicated funding to embed child-specific expertise throughout the process.

Mike Freer:

On 20 March, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Justice, co-hosted a Justice Ministers' Conference with the Netherlands bringing together 42 countries and institutions from across the globe. Support for victims and witnesses of war crimes in Ukraine, including children, was a core theme of the Conference. Additional practical support for the International Criminal Court was collectively agreed, alongside financial contributions totaling over £4 million. The UK announced £395,000 for the Office of the Prosecutor Trust Fund which will be earmarked for support for victims and witnesses. The Ministry of Justice is exploring further the provision of expertise, advice and training including specialist support for children.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Capital Investment**

Rachael Maskell: [\[166281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is planning to hold a further bidding round for Investment Zones.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the [Investment Zones Policy Prospectus](#) published on 15th March 2023.

■ Council Tax: Energy Bills Rebate

Martyn Day: [\[166287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment with his Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of extending the Council Tax rebate to cover the same time period as the Energy Price Guarantee.

Lee Rowley:

The Government set up a £3 billion council tax rebate scheme to provide a one-off payment of £150 to nearly 20 million households in England in council tax bands A-D.

Further information on support the Government is currently providing for households is available [here](#).

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Matthew Pennycook: [\[169373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department holds a list of competent professionals qualified to conduct Fire Risk Appraisals of External Wall construction following the methodology set out in PAS 9980:2022 for existing multi-storey, multi-occupied residential buildings.

Lee Rowley:

This information is not held centrally by the Department.

Homes England holds information relating to those that have registered with its panel of qualified assessors. This is not a complete list, due to the range of professional accrediting bodies of which qualified assessors may be members.

■ Homelessness

Alberto Costa: [\[167159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department are taking to support local authorities with tackling homelessness.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [158774](#) on 9 March 2023.

The Government is spending £2 billion to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years and the vast majority of this funding is being provided to local authorities.

This includes £366 million in funding in 2022/23 through the Homelessness Prevention Grant to help local authorities prevent homelessness and provide temporary accommodation.

■ **Infrastructure: Public Consultation**

Matt Vickers:

[\[166395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that communities are consulted on proposed local infrastructure projects.

Rachel Maclean:

Through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, we are improving the planning process so local communities have more control over what is built, where it is built, and what it looks like.

The process for producing plans will be made simpler, faster and easier for communities to engage with through clear opportunities to get involved at key stages in the process.

We will increase and enhance the opportunities for involvement to ensure that development is brought forward in a way that works best for local people. We are clear that communities must have a say on development that affects them and retain the right to comment on applications.

Alongside traditional forms of engagement, digital engagement will remove barriers to engagement and create a more democratic planning system with planning.

■ **Innovation and Research: Finance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support the development of investment zones; and whether funding earmarked for his Department is being used for projects in investment zones.

Dehenna Davison:

Details on the support available to Investment Zones is set out in the [Policy Prospectus](#).

■ **Mayors: Powers**

Sarah Owen:

[\[169443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department conducted an equality impact assessment on the new powers and funds for the Metro Mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands announced in March 2023.

Dehenna Davison:

I can confirm that the Department conducted public sector equalities duty analysis for each of the 'trailblazer' deeper devolution deals and for the capital regeneration projects in these city regions, and that this analysis was considered by ministers prior to final approval.

We have also gone further, to reiterate what is written in the trailblazer devolution deal documents, in exercising existing and newly devolved functions, the mayors and mayoral combined authorities will continue to adhere to their public sector equality duties.

■ Music Venues: Planning

Mr Clive Betts: [\[166123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a statutory right of comment for grassroots music venues on planning applications.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[166124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of incorporating the agent of change principle in future legislative proposals on planning issues.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[166125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to help protect grassroots music venues through the planning system.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is supportive of ensuring that existing facilities, including music venues, do not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in their area due to new developments. That is why the National Planning Policy Framework includes the 'agent of change' principle. This sets out that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing business and community facilities. This policy includes a specific mention of music venues.

The Government continues to engage with the sector on how local music and cultural venues can be protected through our wider reforms to planning policy.

■ Neighbourhood Plans

Rachael Maskell: [\[167173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will provide additional funding to local authorities for the development of neighbourhood plans.

Rachel Maclean:

We will publish a Chief Planner's letter with information on support arrangements for LPAs in the next financial year.

■ Prefabricated Housing**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[169211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has had discussions with modular housing companies on providing housing for local authorities.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities shares the cross-government objective of increasing the use of modern methods of construction. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on gov.uk.

■ Private Rented Housing: Disability**Paula Barker:**[\[167255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of disabled people who have been served section 21 eviction notices in the last 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

The information is not held centrally.

■ Private Rented Housing: Sales**Christopher Pincher:**[\[166199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of properties sold by small landlords were purchased by (a) private buyers for personal residential use, (b) renters, (c) other UK-based landlords for rental purposes, (d) overseas-based landlords for rental purposes, (e) domestic buyers for development purposes and (f) overseas buyers for development purposes in the latest period for which data is available; and if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the profile of the buyers of these properties.

Rachel Maclean:

The information requested is not held.

■ Refugees: Ukraine**Paula Barker:**[\[167254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to Ukrainian refugees to move into the private rented sector at the end of a Homes for Ukraine scheme placement.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [148806](#) on 23 February 2023.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Disability**Paula Barker:**[\[167256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of suitable temporary accommodation for disabled homeless people.

Paula Barker:[\[167257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of homeless children required to move schools as a result of moving to temporary accommodation in each of the past 12 months.

Paula Barker:[\[167258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, further to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156308 on Bed and Breakfast Accommodation: Children, whether his Department issues guidance to local authorities on reducing the number of households with dependent children in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks; and what steps his Department is taking, through its continuing work with local authorities, to tackle this issue.

Felicity Buchan:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure temporary accommodation is suitable for all members of an applicant's household. Consideration of whether accommodation is suitable will require an assessment of all aspects of the accommodation in the light of the relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the household. This includes any requirements to meet the needs of a person who is disabled or has specific medical needs.

We do not hold data relating to schools and temporary accommodation. Where possible, housing authorities should try to secure accommodation that is as close as possible to where an applicant was previously living. Where an out-of-borough placement is necessary, the authority should seek to retain established links, including education, wherever possible.

As set out in legislation and Chapter 16 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance, the Government has been clear that the long-term use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for families with children is inappropriate and unlawful. We will continue to work with local authorities to limit the use of B&B accommodation.

■ Valuation Office Agency: Publications

Rachael Maskell:

[\[167172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that Valuation Office reports are (a) referred to in all planning processes and (b) published for each development site.

Rachel Maclean:

A local planning authority (LPA) may appoint the VOA on a contractual basis to provide it with a viability assessment in respect of, for example, a specific development site where the LPA is seeking to apply a section 106 planning obligation on a developer for the provision of local infrastructure or affordable housing. Government guidance is clear that any such viability assessment, undertaken by the VOA or any other party, should be prepared on the basis that it will be made publicly available other than in exceptional circumstances, where an executive summary should be made publicly available instead.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Windsor Framework

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[904199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the Windsor Framework on Northern Ireland's place in the Union.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

[Holding answer 22 March 2023]: The Windsor Framework protects and strengthens Northern Ireland's place in our Union and this will be reinforced by the changes we are making to domestic legislation.

As well as ensuring goods available on the shelves in Great Britain are able to move freely to Northern Ireland, the agreement safeguards Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market through agreements on medicines, VAT and State aid.

The agreement ensures that Northern Ireland will benefit from the same VAT and alcohol taxes as apply in the rest of the United Kingdom.

With the agreement, we have restored sovereignty by putting the people of Northern Ireland in charge and eliminating the democratic deficit.

Northern Ireland's businesses have access not only to the UK market, but also to the European single market and the agreement provides Northern Ireland with excellent opportunities for economic growth. In so doing it supports the prosperity of both Northern Ireland and the whole of the UK.

As Tony Blair recently noted, political stability is the best way to protect the union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain and by fixing the problems with the Protocol and restoring the delicate balance inherent in the Belfast/Good Friday

Agreement, we have provided a sound basis for Northern Ireland to move forward economically and politically as an integral and prosperous part of the United Kingdom.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Horizon Europe

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[167265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with the EU on the UK re-joining the Horizon Programme.

George Freeman:

The Government continues to be ready to work constructively with the EU on a range of issues including UK association to Horizon Europe. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met with the EU's Ambassador to the UK, Pedro Serrano, on 14th March and discussed collaboration on science and research, including the Horizon Europe programme. We welcome the EU's recent openness to working closer together. The EU have not yet made any proposals to address the financial terms of UK association, given we are now over 2 years into a 7-year programme.

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[167266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the prospect of the UK re-joining the Horizon Programme.

George Freeman:

Collectively, the Government continues to be ready to work constructively with the EU on a range of issues including UK association to Horizon Europe. The EU have not yet made any proposals to address the financial terms of UK association, given we are now over 2 years into a 7-year programme.

The Government has acted to support researchers and businesses across the UK by introducing the Horizon Guarantee - now extended until end June 2023 and, in November last year, announced £684m of investment into UK R&D.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[166217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what parts of the science spending announced in his Financial Statement and Budget Report will be disbursed by (a) UK Research and Innovation and (b) other bodies.

George Freeman:

At the Spring Budget, my Rt. Hon Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced several new commitments to support the Science Superpower agenda that will be delivered via a range of funding mechanisms. These include a £900m investment in an Exascale supercomputer and AI Research resource to enhance the UK's

capabilities in artificial intelligence, a £2.5bn investment over the next 10 years to grow our Quantum sector, meeting the commitment in the Quantum Strategy with funding going towards quantum research and innovation programmes, and an AI prize which will award £1m every year for the next 10 years to researchers that drive progress in critical areas of AI.

■ Science and Technology: Research

Chi Onwurah: [\[166210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 10 of the UK Science and Technology Framework, what steps she plans to take to support funders to experiment with new approaches; and whether she plans to introduce those new approaches for government funded research and development programmes.

George Freeman:

The Government will respond to the recommendations in the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy in Spring 2023. The review recommended that funders should seek to reduce bureaucratic burdens and improve application processes, including through experimenting with new funding approaches. The Government response will set out further detail on this.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is implementing a new funding service based on a flexible digital platform which will enable the ability to trial future funding approaches.

TRANSPORT

■ A595

Mark Jenkinson: [\[169504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the benefit cost ratio is in the Cumbria County Council submission for the Bothel road scheme.

Mr Richard Holden:

I can confirm that the Department has assessed that the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) for the A595 Strategic Improvements (Bothel) scheme is 0.91, meaning the scheme represents poor value for money. This means it would return less than £1 of benefits for every £1 of taxpayers money invested.

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Wera Hobhouse: [\[166301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the introduction of zero-emission aircraft.

Jesse Norman:

The Government published the Jet Zero Strategy in 2022 which sets out its approach to achieving net zero aviation by 2050. The Strategy considered the potential for zero emission flight alongside other measures.

The Government is investing a record £685 million over three years into R&D in the UK aerospace sector through the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) programme. The Department announced in February £113 million of co-investment with industry in three Rolls-Royce led projects on hydrogen in aviation as well as funding towards Vertical Aerospace, who are developing a battery-electric aircraft in the South-West of England.

As part of the Jet Zero Council, the Department has also established a dedicated Delivery Group to convene activity across Government, industry and academia on the development of Zero Emission Flight.

Andrew Selous:[\[168029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of using public service obligation air routes to introduce zero emissions regional flights in the UK.

Andrew Selous:[\[168030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take steps with Cabinet colleagues to incentivise the manufacture of new zero emissions aircraft in the UK for use on (a) regional and (b) sub-regional routes.

Jesse Norman:

The Government published the Jet Zero Strategy in 2022 which sets out its approach to achieving net zero aviation by 2050. The Strategy considers the potential for zero emission flight alongside other measures. This includes exploring the feasibility of using zero emission aircraft on existing UK government funded PSO routes, as well as noting the balance between reducing aviation emissions and ensuring value for money on routes supported by public funding.

As part of the Jet Zero Council, the Department has established a dedicated Delivery Group to convene activity across Government, industry and academia on the development of zero emission flight.

The Government is also investing £685 million between 2022 and 2035 through the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) Programme to co-fund, with industry, the development of zero-carbon and ultra-efficient aircraft technology. A recent example, announced at the seventh meeting of the Jet Zero Council in February, was £113 million of joint government and industry investment in R&D projects to develop liquid hydrogen combusting jet engines and high-end lightweight batteries for small aircraft.

ATI funding is also supporting the current flight testing by ZeroAvia of a 19-seater aircraft using hydrogen propulsion. If successfully brought to market such aircraft could provide zero emission flight on regional and sub-regional routes.

■ Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance

Selaine Saxby: [\[167267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish the results of the Fix Your Bike Voucher Scheme evaluation.

Jesse Norman:

The Department is currently evaluating the impacts of the Fix Your Bike Voucher scheme. A report on the results of the evaluation will be published in mid-2023.

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Alberto Costa: [\[167161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support rural bus routes.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Government provides Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) with £42 million annually through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for the purpose of subsidising socially necessary services that would otherwise be commercially unviable. The Government also provides over £200 million directly to bus operators every year through the BSOG to keep fares down and help them maintain an extensive network.

The Government initially provided £60 million to help bus operators cap single fares at £2 on services in England outside London from 1 January to 31 March 2023. In addition to this, we will provide up to £75 million to continue to cap single bus fares at £2 in England outside London for a further three months until end June 2023. Over 140 operators covering more than 4,600 routes throughout England are participating in the scheme, including in rural areas, which will help increase patronage on buses and help millions save on their regular travel costs.

Our £20 million Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) is supporting 17 innovative, demand-led minibus trials in rural and suburban areas across 15 local authorities in England.

These pilots are exploring whether Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) can serve these communities more effectively than traditional public transport solutions alone.

■ Cycling and Walking

Kim Leadbeater: [\[167269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help more people to (a) walk, (b) wheel and (c) cycle in (i) 2023-24 and (ii) 2024-25.

Jesse Norman:

The Government expects to invest a total of around £3 billion in active travel from 2020 to 2025. This includes at least £100 million of dedicated capital funding over the two-year period 2023/24 to 2024/25 for active travel infrastructure. In addition to this, the Department will confirm the revenue funding for active travel for 2023/24 and

2024/25 shortly, which pays for programmes including the Bikeability training programme. As outlined in the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), there are a range of cross-Government funding streams supporting the delivery of active travel infrastructure. These funds include the Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund, City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements and National Highways Designated Funds.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance

Kim Leadbeater: [\[167268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for active travel.

Jesse Norman:

The Department's ministers and officials have regular discussions with their counterparts in His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) on active travel funding and other matters. In recent months, discussions on active travel with HMT have focused on the need to provide multi-year funding to support the delivery of the objectives of the second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) published in July 2022. The Government expects to invest a total of around £3 billion in active travel from 2020 to 2025.

Gill Furniss: [\[169375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department will provide for active travel in this Parliament.

Jesse Norman:

In total, the Government expects to provide around £3 billion of funding for active travel over this Parliament from a wide range of Departmental and cross-Government funding streams. Further detail is provided in the second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), published in July 2022, a copy of which is in the House libraries. The figure will be updated in the next Report to Parliament on the delivery of CWIS2.

Gill Furniss: [\[169376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2023 to Question 165429 on Active Travel: Finance, when he plans to publish the next report on the delivery of the cycling and walking investment strategy.

Jesse Norman:

The Department expects to publish the next statutory report to Parliament in due course, alongside the publication of the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3).

■ Driving Tests: Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy

Douglas Chapman: [\[167146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving test appointment slots are available each week in (a) the Dunfermline and (b) the Kirkcaldy Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency test centre.

Douglas Chapman: [\[167147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time for a DVSA practical driving test was in (a) Dunfermline and (b) Kirkcaldy in each of the last 12 months.

Douglas Chapman: [\[167148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many cities do not have a full time DVSA driving test centre.

Mr Richard Holden:

Based on demand, Dunfermline driving test centre operates 3 days per week, and Kirkcaldy operates 5 days per week.

On average, there are 78 driving test slots available per week at Dunfermline test centre, and 138 at Kirkcaldy. Driving examiners are deployed between the two test centres to balance out driving test waiting times.

The average waiting time for a practical car test at Dunfermline, and Kirkcaldy is 12 weeks, which is less than the current national average. As of 20 March 2023, there were 153 and 425 driving tests available at Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy respectively.

Based on customer demand, 60 cities, out of 70, have permanent driving test centres. The ten that do not are listed below, alongside their nearest test centre. The only cities without a driving test centre within 15 miles are Wells and St Davids.

NAME OF CITY THAT DOES NOT HAVE A PERMANENT DRIVING TEST CENTRE (DTC)	NAME OF NEAREST DTC
Bath	Bristol Kingswood
Brighton and Hove	Lancing
Dunfermline	Kirkcaldy
Ely	Cambridge (Brookmount Court)
Ripon	Knareborough
Salford	Cheetham Hill
St Asaph (Llanelwy)	Rhyl

NAME OF CITY THAT DOES NOT HAVE A PERMANENT DRIVING TEST CENTRE (DTC)	NAME OF NEAREST DTC
St Davids	Pembroke Dock
Truro	Camborne
Wells	Weston-Super-Mare

Douglas Chapman:[\[168056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving test examiner posts are vacant in (a) Dunfermline and (b) Kirkcaldy; how many applications the DVSA received for advertised driving test examiner vacancies in each of those areas in each of the last 12 months; and (how many vacancies were successfully filled in each of those areas in each of those months.

Mr Richard Holden:

Driving examiners (DE), based at Kirkcaldy driving test centre (DTC), are deployed between Dunfermline DTC and Kirkcaldy DTC to service demand.

There are test slots available to book at Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy within the booking window. There is sufficient resource to service demand at both test centres; therefore, there are no DE vacancies.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Jessica Morden:**[\[169232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the Government has made on beginning the application process for the rapid charging fund.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is working closely with key stakeholders, including all the motorway service area operators in England, on the development of the Rapid Charging Fund (RCF) and its pilot. The Government is also working on a number of milestones for the RCF this year, including a pilot and a public consultation.

Martyn Day:[\[169352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of installing electric vehicle charging signage on (a) motorways and (b) major A roads.

Mr Richard Holden:

No assessment has been made as regulations already provide for signs on motorways and major A roads to show electric vehicle recharging points.

■ Great British Railways: Location

Rachael Maskell: [\[169341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Great British Railways National HQ competition, in what way the public vote was taken into account in deciding the winning location; and if he will publish the results of that vote.

Huw Merriman:

The decision was taken based on the assessment of Expression of Interest applications against the six published selection criteria (alignment to levelling up principles; connected and easy to get to; opportunities for GBR; value for money; railway heritage and links to the network; and public support) and the result of the public vote. Derby's application scored highest in the critical assessment conducted by officials and also attracted the most public votes.

The Great British Railways Transition Team has published the result of the public vote on their website: <https://gbrrt.co.uk/what-we-do/hq/>

Rachael Maskell: [\[169342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason York was not chosen as the location for the Great British Railways National Headquarters; and what weighting was given to the level of industrial skills among the local workforce in each candidate location in deciding the final location.

Huw Merriman:

The decision was made by the Secretary of State for Transport based on the assessment of EOI applications against the six published selection criteria (alignment to levelling up principles; connected and easy to get to; opportunities for GBR; value for money; railway heritage and links to the network; and public support) and the result of the public vote. Derby's application scored the highest in the critical assessment conducted by officials and attracted the most public votes.

Rachael Maskell: [\[169343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether (a) he or (b) Ministers from his Department visited York as part of its decision on the future headquarters of Great British Rail.

Huw Merriman:

As part of the competition process the previous Rail Minister and the Great British Railways Transition Team visited the six shortlisted locations between July and August 2022, during the six-week public vote.

■ Great British Railways: York

Rachael Maskell: [\[169344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether plans to establish a regional hub of Great British Railways in York.

Huw Merriman:

Whilst the Great British Railways (GBR) headquarters will be in Derby, other towns and cities will host empowered regional GBR hubs equipped with decision making and investment powers to benefit their local communities. The locations of the Great British Railways Hubs will be decided and announced in due course. Ongoing development of York Central will deliver modern, world-class facilities, and York will remain a major centre for railway employment and a critical hub for decisions on the East Coast.

■ **Railways: Expenditure**

Jonathan Edwards:[\[169243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish his Department's expenditure on Network Rail operations in England in each of the last five years.

Huw Merriman:

Network Rail's expenditure for England in the past five years (excluding interest, tax and centrally managed costs) was as follows shown in £m:

	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Operating Costs	3,082	3,053	2,595	2,274	2,041
Traction electricity, Industry costs and rates	769	758	710	667	577
Renewals	3,244	3,234	2,410	2,547	1,875
Enhancements	1,616	1,443	1,504	2,450	2,774
Total	8,711	8,489	7,220	7,938	7,267

By way of context, 93% of rail journeys in Great Britain started or ended in England over the 5-year period covered above.

■ **Railways: York**

Rachael Maskell:[\[169340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the contribution of York's rail cluster in digital and advance rail to the rail industry in the UK.

Huw Merriman:

The Government is committed to the future of advanced and digital rail. This is evidenced by our recent commitments to the future of rail, including the Integrated

Rail Plan, a £96 billion programme to transform rail services in the North and Midlands.

York remains an important centre of railway expertise, through its long history of rail engineering and as the home to the National Railway Museum, Network Rail's Eastern Route and the rail operator, LNER. York is also home to the largest Rail Operating Centre in the country and will have operational oversight of the pioneering East Coast Main Line upgrade. I am confident that York will continue to play a key role in helping to shape the railway of the future, through its strong heritage and through its considerable expertise in digital, data and automation.

■ Roads: Safety

Olivia Blake: [\[169441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to assess the adequacy of the funding available to local authorities for road safety measures.

Mr Richard Holden:

Road safety spending is devolved to local authorities. They set their own priorities with their knowledge of their areas and local needs and considerations.

■ Transport: Regulation

Grahame Morris: [\[169249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government will publish its response to the Future of Transport Regulatory Review consultation.

Jesse Norman:

The response to the Future of Transport Regulatory Review consultation will be published in the coming weeks, as outlined in the Government Response to Sir Patrick Vallance's Report. The consultation response will set out the next steps to remove regulatory barriers to innovation in transport technologies.

■ Travel: Disability

Rachael Maskell: [\[168076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people can benefit from advances in technology that improve their ability to travel.

Mr Richard Holden:

The 2018 Inclusive Transport Strategy set out the ambition for equal access for disabled people using the transport system by 2030, with assistance if physical infrastructure remains a barrier. The Strategy explained how technology can contribute to this.

My Department continues to work towards this ambition. This has included work on:

- Mobility as a Service - technology to simplify and tailor journey planning for users, making travel more integrated, safer, and comfortable.
- Collaborating with the Connected Places Catapult to understand how we can drive accessibility in micro-mobility, looking at emerging modes of transport and asking how we can influence the market to make them as accessible as possible.
- Supporting the Rail Delivery Group to launch the rail passenger assistance app in May 2021, which allows passengers to request assistance and review journeys using a smartphone.
- Technology Research and Innovation Grants, for which the assessment criteria includes assessing their potential to improve accessibility, and includes a specific accessibility grant funding competition to facilitate products and services to improve the ability for disabled people to travel.

■ Travel: Finance

Gill Furniss:

[\[169377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 9 March 2023 on Transport Update, HCWS625, whether the policies set out in the Answers to Questions (a) 147238, (b) 147239 and (c) 147243 on Travel: Finance remain his policies.

Jesse Norman:

Yes.

TREASURY

■ Bakeries: Business Rates

Bill Esterson:

[\[169515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what requirements there are for bakeries to be eligible for the higher rate of business rates relief.

Victoria Atkins:

I refer the Hon. Member to UIN [134057](#), UIN [135352](#) and UIN [135262](#) answered on 02 February.

■ British Patient Capital

Chi Onwurah:

[\[167105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.114 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, published on 15 March 2023, what estimate he has made of the regional breakdown of the £3 billion investment in British Patient Capital.

Andrew Griffith:

The extension of the British Patient Capital (BPC) programme until 2033-34 will be delivered in line with the British Business Bank's (BBB's) and BPC's existing mandate.

The British Business Bank has an objective to identify and help to reduce imbalances in access to finance for smaller businesses across the UK.

To do this, it is important that the BBB deploys the right mix of programmes and interventions to meet the needs of businesses across the UK with different financing needs. Key programmes to tackle the structural barriers in regional access to finance include the Regional Angels Programme to reduce imbalances for early stage equity finance for smaller businesses. Spending Review 2021 also announced £1.6bn for the next generation of regional funds across the UK.

In 2021/22, the Bank exceeded its regional deployment target, deploying more than £900 million of finance outside London and supporting almost 83,000 businesses outside London at the end of March 2022.

British Patient Capital invests in venture and growth capital, supporting the growth of the UK's innovative companies wherever they are in the UK. As of June 2022, British Patient Capital commitments (including by third parties) totalled over £10.7bn.

BPC invests on a fully commercial basis to maximise returns and manage risk. It will continue to do so through its extension to 2033-34, while increasing its focus on the most R&D intensive companies across the UK.

■ Buildings: Energy**Ruth Jones:**[\[169432\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 4.152 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, what assessment he has made of the impact of the budget's measures on helping people into employment on labour shortages in the retrofit sector.

James Cartlidge:

At Spring Budget 2023 the Government announced a comprehensive package to help increase employment through tackling inactivity, removing barriers that prevent people from working, and supporting them into the labour force.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) expects this package to result in 110,000 more individuals in the labour market by the end of the forecast period in 2027/28. Helping more individuals into employment will help address labour shortages across all UK sectors and industries.

Also in March, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero announced a new £5 million Heat Training Grant to support 10,000 trainees over the next 2 years to become low carbon heating experts.

■ Business Rates: Reform

Bill Esterson:

[\[169256\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade on the potential merits of reforming business rates in the period since the Spring Budget.

Victoria Atkins:

At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced a package of changes and tax cuts worth £13.6 billion over the next five years, including:

- a freeze to the business rates multiplier for 2023-2024, a tax cut worth £9.3 billion over the next 5 years, meaning all bills are 6 per cent lower than without the freeze;
- an increased 75 per cent relief for retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) properties, up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business for 2023-24. This is a tax cut worth over £2 billion for around 230,000 RHL businesses, to support the high street and protect small shops;
- an Exchequer funded Transitional Relief scheme worth £1.6 billion to protect an estimated 700,000 ratepayers facing bill increases due to increases in rateable value. The Government has announced that it will permanently scrap 'downwards caps' which had restricted falling bills in previous schemes. This will benefit around 300,000 ratepayers who will see their full bill decrease from April 2023.
- Over £500 million of support over the next three years with a new Supporting Small Business scheme. This will cap bill increases to £50 per month (£600 per year) for businesses losing some or all of their Small Business or Rural Rate Relief due to the revaluation.

Treasury Ministers regularly engage with other Government departments and external stakeholders on a range of issues.

■ Childcare: Finance

Miriam Cates:

[\[166399\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of allowing the full or partial value of the free childcare hours entitlement to be paid to informal childcare providers such as grandparents.

John Glen:

The government is committed to supporting the early years sector and, at Spring Budget, announced an extra £4.4 billion of investment by 27-28 for the free hours offers in England. Through this package, the government will be more than doubling its spend on free childcare hours.

Local authorities are required by legislation to deliver free early education entitlements places through providers registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register. This can include nurseries, childminders (including those registered with a

childminder agency) and schools which take children aged two and over and which are therefore exempt from registration with Ofsted as early years providers.

The government recognises that relatives do an incredibly important job in a child's upbringing and can also help families meet their childcare needs. However, to ensure quality early education, free childcare entitlements cannot be used to pay family members to look after children.

■ Civil Society and Small Businesses: Bank Services

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[904251\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with banks on taking steps to support small businesses, social enterprises and charities to open bank accounts.

Andrew Griffith:

I and senior officials engage regularly with banks on a range of issues, including access to bank accounts for small businesses, social enterprises and charities.

In relation to social enterprises and charities specifically, the Treasury recognises the challenges they have faced accessing and managing banking services. That's why the previous Economic Secretary hosted a roundtable event last year, bringing together lenders and representatives from bodies representing charities and community organisations to discuss this important issue. Lenders heard firsthand the problems many charities and community groups have experienced, and also used this opportunity to set out the products they offer, and the diverse range of factors charities and community groups need to consider in relation to banking requirements.

Banking and finance industry group UK Finance is now working with banks and sector representatives to identify any changes banks can make to simplify processes like changing signatories on accounts, and to produce guidance aimed at helping charities and community groups access and understand banking.

■ Efficiencies and Value for Money Committee

Emily Thornberry:

[\[169230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's announcement entitled New efficiency drive to cut £5.5 billion of government waste published on 21 March 2022, how many meetings of the Efficiency and Value for Money Committee took place from 1 April 2022 to 20 March 2023; which ministers attended those meetings; and if he will make an estimate of the total amount of savings that have been delivered by that committee up to 20 March 2023, broken down by the department responsible.

John Glen:

It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not normally shared publicly.

■ Employment

Charlotte Nichols: [\[167248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Spring Budget 2023 on employment rates.

John Glen:

The Spring Budget 2023 takes significant action to tackle inactivity, by removing barriers that prevent people from working, and supporting them into the labour force.

The OBR has provided analysis of the Spring Budget's labour supply package, which can be found in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook section of their website:

<https://obr.uk/economic-and-fiscal-outlooks/>

■ Exports: Australia

Angus Brendan MacNeil: [\[167066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which five UK sectors exported the largest value of goods to Australia in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of goods exported to Australia did they each contribute.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on UK imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly, as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), available via their dedicated website www.uktradeinfo.com.

As part of the wider OTS portfolio, HMRC publishes annual statistics on international trade by particular business characteristics - industry group (sectors), age of business and size of business. The latest published statistics (2021) including exports of goods to Australia appears in the table found

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/uk-trade-in-goods-by-business-characteristics-2021-data-tables> .

■ Gift Aid

Emily Thornberry: [\[167061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) charities and (b) community amateur sports clubs based outside the UK claimed Gift Aid on donations received from UK taxpayers in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20, (iii) 2020-21 and (iv) 2021-22; and what was the total value of the Gift Aid claimed on those donations in each of those financial years.

Emily Thornberry: [\[167062\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many charities based outside the UK applied for recognition as charities under the provisions of the Finance Act 2010 from 1 April 2010 to 1 March 2023; how many of those charities were successful in their applications; and if he will provide a breakdown of successful applicants during that period by nationality.

James Cartlidge:

From Spring Budget government restricted UK charitable tax reliefs to UK charities and CASCs. This means that EU/EEA charities will no longer be able access reliefs.

There were around 5 charities and CASCs that submitted claims in each of the years from 2018/19 to 2021/22. Due to the low numbers, we have combined charities and CASCs. The total value of Gift Aid paid to EU/EEA charities and CASCs across that period from 2018/19 until 2021/22 was £1.3m. This can be broken down as; £0.5m in 2019, £0.4m in 2020, £0.1m in 2021, and £0.2m in 2022.

There are approximately 25 EU/EEA charities that applied for recognition and were accepted as charities by HMRC since 2013 (due to data retention policies, we do not have complete data on applications before 2013). During that same period approximately 35 charity applications for recognition were rejected which included 30 EU/EEA charities and 5 from charities located outside the UK and EU/EEA.

The numbers have not been divided by nationality due to the low numbers of charities applying as releasing the detail requested would pose a reasonable risk of disclosing information relating to one or more "charities" who could be identified from it.

■ Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[167107\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 3.100 of the Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, what the evidential basis is for the adequacy of £10 million funding in the MHRA achieving the objective of having a fully operational approval process in place from 2024.

John Glen:

£10m over 2 years represents a significant increase in the funding MHRA receives from government. This funding, along with proposals to make greater use of international recognition, was based on extensive work by the MHRA and detailed discussions with HMT. It will ensure MHRA is able to implement swift new approvals processes from next year.

■ Research and Development Tax Credit**Chi Onwurah:**[\[167111\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many SMEs claiming R&D tax credits have R&D expenditure between 25 percent and 39 percent of their total expenditure.

Victoria Atkins:

To support those most impacted by the Research and Development (R&D) tax relief rate changes announced at Autumn Statement 2022, the additional tax relief for R&D intensive SMEs announced at Spring Budget 2023 is targeted specifically at loss-making R&D intensive SMEs, who are most affected by the changes.

■ Treasury: Procurement**Florence Eshalomi:** [\[169508\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many suppliers her Department excluded from procurement on the grounds of (a) fraud, (b) corruption and (c) other grounds under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 from 2015 to 2022.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave to UIN 157644 on 8 March.

■ VAT**Amy Callaghan:** [\[169486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to undertake a review of levels of VAT.

Victoria Atkins:

VAT is the UK's third largest tax forecast to raise £161 billion in 2023/24, helping to fund key spending priorities such as public services, including the NHS, education and defence.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no current plans to change the levels of VAT.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Ethnic Groups: Employment****Anneliese Dodds:** [\[169394\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 69 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on establishing an Inclusion At Work panel.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169395\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 70 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on updating guidance on positive action.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169396\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 16 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on the publication of voluntary ethnicity pay gap reporting.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169397\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 7 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made of the consultation on standards for ethnicity data collection across government.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169398\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 8 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on the consultation on the ethnicity facts and figures website.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169399\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 3 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on engaging with (a) service providers, (b) international organisations and (c) experts to better measure and monitor online abuse.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169400\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 4 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what progress she has made on the RDU's review of online misinformation.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169401\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to action 72 of the report entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, whether the Office for Artificial Intelligence has established a national position on governing and regulating Artificial Intelligence.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169402\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 10.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169403\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 12.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169404\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic

Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 14.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169405\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 29.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169406\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 17.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169407\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 20.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169408\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many recommendations of the Final report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities, published by the Minister for Equalities on 3 December 2021, have been implemented in full.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169409\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 57.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169410\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 65.

Anneliese Dodds: [\[169411\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 7.

Anneliese Dodds:[\[169412\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the policy paper entitled Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, published on 17 March 2022, what recent progress the Government has made on action 9.

Maria Caulfield:

When the Minister for Women and Equalities published Inclusive Britain, our ground-breaking strategy for tackling ethnic disparities, she committed to reporting back to Parliament on progress. We will publish the update report shortly, outlining progress against all 74 actions.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services****Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[169179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many calls to his Department were (a) received and (b) answered by service area in each of the last five years; and what the average wait time for such calls was in each such area in each such year.

Mims Davies:

DWP plans resourcing according to forecasted telephony demand in an effort to keep wait times down. Wait time performance is frequently reviewed, and where DWP's telephony is delivered by an outsourced provider we use the Key Performance Indicator of percentage of calls answered.

The data below shows how many calls were (a) received, (b) answered and (c) average speed of answer for each service area in each of the last five years. CFCD data is only available for the last 2 years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	SERVICE AREA	CALLS OFFERED	CALLS ANSWERED	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWERHH:MM:SS
2022-2023	CFCD	2,181,364	1,870,726	0:06:37
2022-2023	CMG	1,969,296	1,579,458	0:14:09
2022-2023	Disability Services	8,031,706	5,916,291	0:18:47
2022-2023	Retirement Services	9,563,255	8,065,542	0:06:22
2022-2023	Universal Credit	15,583,662	14,504,606	0:03:00
2022-2023	Working Age	3,848,833	2,837,717	0:18:55

FINANCIAL YEAR	SERVICE AREA	CALLS OFFERED	CALLS ANSWERED	AVERAGE SPEED OF
				ANSWERHH:MM:SS
Data above covers the period 1/4/22 – 19/3/23 representing the latest available data for the current financial year.				
2021-2022	CFCD	2,266,123	2,044,015	0:04:32
2021-2022	CMG	1,853,670	1,403,894	0:17:06
2021-2022	Disability Services	7,788,882	5,883,066	0:17:45
2021-2022	Retirement Services	8,489,843	6,660,842	0:09:11
2021-2022	Universal Credit	18,406,628	16,100,254	0:05:08
2021-2022	Working Age	4,682,665	3,526,054	0:17:35
2020-2021	CMG	1,494,693	1,098,457	0:14:40
2020-2021	Disability Services	5,800,280	4,319,762	0:17:11
2020-2021	Retirement Services	7,053,720	5,440,280	0:08:43
2020-2021	Universal Credit	17,407,587	15,870,315	0:03:41
2020-2021	Working Age	5,151,549	3,884,057	0:16:55
2019-2020	CMG	3,464,411	2,750,564	0:08:53
2019-2020	Disability Services	7,703,309	6,154,284	0:09:58
2019-2020	Retirement Services	9,338,493	7,866,169	0:04:52
2019-2020	Universal Credit	18,588,061	16,290,226	0:04:45
2019-2020	Working Age	9,901,097	7,073,534	0:15:48
2018-2019	CMG	3,664,662	3,289,464	0:01:18
2018-2019	Disability Services	7,395,433	6,147,557	0:06:50
2018-2019	Retirement Services	9,567,951	8,496,762	0:03:06
2018-2019	Universal Credit	13,921,347	11,564,360	0:06:28

FINANCIAL YEAR	SERVICE AREA	CALLS OFFERED	CALLS ANSWERED	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWERHH:MM:SS
2018-2019	Working Age	17,032,506	12,699,993	0:11:49

Year From - Offered To	DEBT RECOVERY LINE			DEBT PAY LINE (INC SERCO)		
	Offered	Answered	ASA	Offered	Answered	ASA
Apr 2018 – Mar 2019	1511241	1319552	N/A	N/A	378723	N/A
Apr 2019 – Mar 2020	2185905	1493931	17:33	476005	423857	01:20
Apr 2020 – Mar 2021	1050818	833339	10:47	376987	354297	01:59
Apr 2021 – Mar 2022	1768821	1598025	05:13	823237	785246	01:45
Apr 2022 – Feb 2023	1604141	1390350	07:25	749320	705380	03:46

NBFH (National Benefit Fraud Hotline) – please note the line was shut down from April 20 to March 22 due to Covid.

April 22 to March 23 (WC 13/03) - Internal DWP team.

Average call waiting time: 6:13

Total calls received: 97,720

Total calls answered: 75,137

April 19 to 20 March 20 (Serco)

Average call waiting time: 38s

Total calls received: 123,341

Total calls answered 116,774

Sept 18 to March 19 (Serco)

Average call waiting time: 37s

Total calls received: 73,709

Total calls answered: 69,540

April 2018 to Sept 18 (Capita)

Average call waiting time: 57s

Total calls received: 70,959

Total calls answered: 66,070

Please note this information is derived from the Department's management information designed solely for the purpose of helping the Department to manage its business. As such, it has not been subjected to the rigorous quality assurance checks applied to our published official statistics. As DWP holds the information internally, we have released it. However, it is possible information held by DWP may change due to operational reasons and we recommend that caution be applied when using it.

■ Earnings Rules

David Linden: [\[166325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the complement of FTE Work Coaches required by his Department to meet the policy decision to increase the individual Administrative Earnings Threshold from the equivalent of 15 hours at National Living Wage to 18 hours.

David Linden: [\[166326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the complement of FTE Work Coaches required by his Department to meet the policy decision to remove the couples Administrative Earnings Threshold.

David Linden: [\[166327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the complement of FTE Work Coaches required by his Department to meet the policy decision on additional Work Coach time for Incapacity Benefits claimants.

David Linden: [\[166328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, what estimate he has made of the number of additional full-time equivalent work coaches that will be required by his Department as a result of the policy decision on additional support and conditionality for carers of young children.

Mims Davies:

Work Coaches are vital to getting people into jobs and supporting people to earn more. They are central to a number of the measures announced at Budget, including stepping up Jobcentre support for parents, disabled people and people with health conditions.

We are reviewing our internal plans to ensure we grow our capacity appropriately and effectively, this will include further recruitment to support delivery of these measures.

■ **Employment: Chronic Illnesses and Disability**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[169302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference the policy paper, Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published in March 2023, what recent progress he has made on the small-scale test of employment and health discussions; and if he will publish the outcomes from the test.

Tom Pursglove:

The Employment and Health Discussion was first referenced in the Health and Disability Green Paper published in July 2021, and we provided an update in Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper published on 15 March 2023.

The Employment and Health Discussion is a voluntary service available to claimants with a disability, and/or long-term health condition; it is not part of the assessment process and takes place before the Work Capability Assessment. It is a discussion between a health care professional and a claimant, focusing on what they can do, and any barriers preventing movement towards work and ways to overcome them.

The small scale proof of concept launched at Leeds Health Model Office in May 2022, and we are currently reviewing the initial findings and exploring next steps, including expansion in order to generate and gather more in depth detailed evidence.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[169303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference the policy paper, Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published in March 2023, if he will make an assessment of the (a) demographic and (b) socioeconomic characteristics of those who claim the limited capability for work and work-related activity element of Universal Credit and do not receive Personal Independence Payments.

Tom Pursglove:

The department aims to publish a range of information on claimants of the limited capability for work and work-related activity element of Universal Credit in due course, and will pre-announce any publication in line with normal statistical practices.

■ **Habitual Residence Test**

Patrick Grady:

[\[169329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department have made of the potential merits of changing the requirements of past presence tests for applicants to the over 80 pension to take account of peoples inability to travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Laura Trott:

The Category D State Pension is a non-contributory pension for those aged 80 and over who either have no basic State Pension or whose State Pension is less than the current Category D rate of £85.00 per week and who meet the residency conditions. The residency conditions include the requirement to have been resident in Great Britain for 10 years in a continuous period of 20 years which includes the day before the person's 80th birthday or any day thereafter. This residence requirement is a different test to the "past presence test" which applies to certain disability and carers benefits.

The Category D State Pension does not form part of the new State Pension for those who reach State Pension age on or after 6th April 2016. No assessment has been made of the merits of changing the residence requirements in light of the Covid 19 travel restrictions.

■ Social Security Benefits: Applications**Seema Malhotra:****[169308]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March to Question 163821 on Social Security Benefits: Applications, how were participants in the (a) digital Personal Independence Payment and (b) Attendance Allowance service trials selected.

Tom Pursglove:**Personal Independence Payment**

We are currently operating a small-scale test of the new online apply service for PIP as a limited service, initially offering it to a small number of claimants who call the phone line to begin their claim for PIP.

Currently, we are offering the service to 60 claimants a day. Call agents offer the voluntary option to claim online to claimants within scope of the current service until the daily limit is met.

The following groups will be incrementally included as we grow the scope of the service:

- anyone applying in an official capacity (e.g. appointees);
- anyone with a Welsh or Northern Ireland postcode;
- anyone applying for special rules;
- anyone with a previous or existing PIP or DLA claim; and
- those without a NINO or with a GY or JY postcode.

This approach allows us to build, develop and design the service, exploring and making improvements as we gradually increase its availability.

Attendance Allowance

We are currently inviting up to 60 claimants per week into the private beta trial from a variety of sources. The current split is 25 claimants via Age UK, 25 claimants who have called the helpline in Great Britain and 10 claimants who have called the helpline in Northern Ireland.

Invites are being offered to anyone who meets the current scope of the private beta, until a daily limit is reached. The daily limits are 5 per day at Age UK, 5 per day for the Great Britain helpline and 2 per day for the Northern Ireland helpline.

Those not being included currently in the private beta are:

- anyone applying for special rules;
- anyone applying in an official capacity (power of attorney, corporate acting body, appointees);
- anyone needing the form in Welsh language; and
- anyone needing to report a change of circumstances.

We plan to scale the number of self-serving claimants through telephony in the future and also extend the sources we recruit from. This includes visiting officers and other third-party organisations.

■ Social Security Benefits: Self-harm and Suicide

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[161347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of February 21 to Question 149568 on Social Security Benefits: Self-Harm and Suicide, whether the requested information is collated elsewhere.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[161348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of February 21 to Question 149567 on Social Security Benefits: Self-Harm and Suicide, whether the requested information is collated elsewhere.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[161349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of February 21 to Question 149569 on Social Security Benefits: Self-Harm and Suicide, whether the requested information is collated elsewhere.

Guy Opperman:

The individual declarations are held locally across the DWP estate for a 6-year period. However, to collate the information requested would incur disproportionate costs.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[167143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of a UK pension live in countries without a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK by (a) the country they live in and (b) their gender.

Laura Trott:

This information is published on Stat-Xplore <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk> and currently extends to November 2020.

The number of people in receipt of a UK State Pension living in countries without a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK is 298,294.

The breakdown by country and gender are shown in the tables below:

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Antigua	141	166
Albania	8	7
Algeria	13	5
Andorra	91	74
Anguilla	33	48
Antilles (Netherlands)	20	19
Argentina	128	132
Aruba	..	6
Ascension Island	7	..
Australia	100,047	122,289
Bahamas	116	139
Bahrain	79	48
Bangladesh	175	795
Belize	57	38
Bolivia	17	12
Botswana	89	55
Brazil	485	284
Brunei	16	8

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION

RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
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Burkina Faso
Burma (Myanmar)
Cameroon	6	5
Cape Verde Islands	..	6
Cayman Islands	111	78
Chile	168	141
China People's Republic	249	74
Colombia	128	127
Cook Islands	9	..
Costa Rica	65	38
Dom Commonwealth (Dominica)	217	244
Dominican Republic	26	17

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION

RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
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Ecuador	54	33
Egypt	189	116
El Salvador	8	5
Equatorial Guinea
Ethiopia	22	7
Falkland Islands & Dep	47	26
Faroe Islands	5	7
Fiji	63	28
French Polynesia	..	..
Gambia	44	23
Ghana	451	388

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Greenland	..	..
Grenada	402	500
Guatemala	7	5
Guyana	110	101
Honduras	6	8
Hong Kong	1,510	904
India	2,145	2,113
Indonesia	314	42
Iran	21	11
Iraq	5	..
Japan	4,644	2,158
Jordan	72	46
Kampuchea	40	..
Kenya	345	305
Kuwait	10	5
Laos	19	..
Lebanon	73	49
Lesotho	6	7
Macau	7	..
COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Malagasy Republic	6	5
Malawi	39	31
Malaysia	1,072	1,159
Mexico	241	228

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Monaco	246	143
Montserrat	29	40
Morocco	112	70
Mozambique	9	..
Namibia	49	42
Nepal	29	13
Nevis, St Kitts-Nevis	131	148
New Caledonia	8	10
Nicaragua	15	6
Nigeria	1,090	804
Norfolk Island	..	..
Oman	71	29
Pakistan	1,103	1,579
Panama	23	14
Papua New Guinea	8	5
Paraguay	14	8
Peru	66	64
Qatar	41	15
Republic of Azerbaijan	11	..
Republic of Belarus	13	12
Republic of Georgia	19	..
Republic of Kazakhstan	12	..
Republic of Kyrgyzstan	5	..
Republic of Moldova	5	..
Republic of Yemen	172	501
Russian Federation	95	41

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION

RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
San Marino	..	..
Saudi Arabia	75	20
Senegal	..	8
Seychelles	73	78
Sierra Leone	18	27
Singapore	514	359

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION

RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Solomon Islands	..	..
Somalia	9	13
South Africa	12,932	17,411
South Korea	288	91
Sri Lanka	557	572
St Helena & Deps	56	48
St Lucia	376	454
St Vincents & Grenadines	221	229
Sudan	5	..
Surinam	5	..
Swaziland	42	37
Syria	5	..
Tahiti	7	..
Taiwan	88	20
Tanzania	54	23
Thailand	4,777	586
Togo	..	..

COUNTRY OF STATE PENSION RECEIPT	MALE	FEMALE
Tonga	8	6
Trinidad & Tobago	456	843
Tunisia	62	53
Turks & Caicos Islands	17	6
Uganda	47	26
Ukraine	59	33
United Arab Emirates	431	180
United States Minor Outlying Islands	..	5
Uruguay	35	27
Vanuatu	24	13
Venezuela	24	16
Vietnam	105	14
Virgin Islands (British)	28	19
Western Samoa	..	..
Zambia	79	86
Zimbabwe	311	546

Please note:

1. The ".." denotes a nil or negligible number of claimants or award amount based on a nil or negligible number of claimants.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[167237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many UK pensioners living overseas had their pensions stopped in 2022 because of life certificate forms and postal issues, broken down by country.

Laura Trott:

DWP allows 16 weeks for the completed Life Certificate to be returned under normal circumstances. In 2022, DWP was notified of the postal issues effecting deliveries in Canada. In light of this, we reinstated the State Pension of those effected and extended the normal 16-week time limit by another 48 weeks for the completed Life Certificates to be returned.

DWP does not maintain data regarding the temporary suspension of International State Pensions owing to postal issues, as this is not something the Department is able to determine. However, DWP does hold data for the temporary suspensions due to the non/late return of a Life Certificate in 2022.

The number of UK State Pension customers whose payments were temporarily suspended due to the non/late return of Life Certificates issued in 2022 was 37,517; this is broken down by country as follows: -

ALBANIA	7
Andorra	51
Anguilla	74
Antigua	88
Antilles (Netherlands)	8
Armenia	1
Bahamas	211
Bangladesh	429
Barbados	796
Benin	2
Bermuda	90
Brazil	737
Bulgaria	348
Burkina Faso	1
Canada	19,061
Cayman Islands	42
Central African Republic	1
Costa Rica	55
Croatia	105
Cyprus	1,831
Czech Republic	126
Denmark	525
Djibouti	1

ALBANIA	7
Dominican Republic	38
Egypt	224
Estonia	18
Falkland Islands	11
Fiji	60
France	1,690
Gambia	50
Georgia	12
Greenland	0
Grenada	217
Guam	0
Guyana	86
Hong Kong	527
Hungary	146
India	1,934
Indonesia	246
Israel	426
Jamaica	2,847
Jordan	67
Kenya	234
Kuwait	17
Kyrgyzstan	5
Liberia	2
Luxembourg	85
Malawi	33
Malaysia	74

ALBANIA	7
Maldives	0
Mexico	454
Monaco	92
Montserrat	27
Morocco	7
North Korea	0
Panama	28
Philippines	1,564
Puerto Rico	4
Republic of the Congo	2
Russia	5
Saudi Arabia	3
Serbia & Montenegro	77
Seychelles	2
Singapore	191
Slovakia	8
Sri Lanka	30
St Lucia	457
St Vincent/Grenadines	190
Sudan	5
Swaziland	2
Switzerland	105
Syria	6
Taiwan	17
Tanzania	34
Trinidad & Tobago	264

ALBANIA	7
Turks & Caicos Islands	4
Uganda	49
United Arab Emirates	50
Uruguay	22
Vietnam	88
Virgin Islands (British)	29
Virgin Islands (USA)	15
Zimbabwe	47

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.

David Linden:

[\[169389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many UK pensioners living overseas had their pensions stopped incorrectly in 2022 broken down by nation.

Laura Trott:

Where payments are stopped and then reinstated, this is due to late return or non-return of a life certificate rather than from anything incorrect on the part of DWP. The number of payments stopped as a result of late return or non-return are:

ALBANIA	7
Andorra	51
Anguilla	74
Antigua	88
Antilles (Netherlands)	8
Armenia	1
Bahamas	211
Bangladesh	429
Barbados	796

ALBANIA	7
Benin	2
Bermuda	90
Brazil	737
Bulgaria	348
Burkina Faso	1
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Croatia	105
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Czech Republic	126
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Dominican Republic	38
Egypt	224
Estonia	18
Falkland Islands	11
Fiji	60
France	1,690
Gambia	50
Georgia	12
Greenland	0
Grenada	217
Guam	0
Guyana	86

ALBANIA	7
Hong Kong	527
Hungary	146
India	1,934
Indonesia	246
Israel	426
Jamaica	2,847
Jordan	67
Kenya	234
Kuwait	17
Kyrgyzstan	5
Liberia	2
Luxembourg	85
Malawi	33
Malaysia	74
Maldives Islands	0
Mexico	454
Monaco	92
Montserrat	27
Morocco	7
North Korea	0
Panama	28
Philippines	1,564
Puerto Rico	4
Republic of the Congo	2
Russia	5
Saudi Arabia	3

ALBANIA	7
Serbia & Montenegro	77
Seychelles	2
Singapore	191
Slovakia	8
Sri Lanka	30
St Lucia	457
St Vincent/Grenadines	190
Sudan	5
Swaziland	2
Switzerland	105
Syria	6
Taiwan	17
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Wendy Chamberlain:[\[169423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, from what location life certificate forms for UK pensioners living overseas are posted from; and which company is responsible for the posting of the forms.

Laura Trott:

Life Certificates are issued from our supplier, Allied Publicity Services (APS) who is based in Runcorn, Cheshire.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus****Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[169176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 161211 on Universal Credit: Coronavirus, how much was not collected in deductions from Universal Credit as a result of the suspension of deductions during the covid-19 pandemic in the period between January 2020 and January 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and in agreement with His Majesty's Treasury and the Chancellor, debt recovery was paused for 3 months from April 2020.

Due to the number of variables involved, and taking account of the phased reintroduction of debt recovery, we cannot accurately provide details of the amount not collected in deductions from Universal Credit for the period January 2020 to January 2021.

The department continues to have a well-established process for working with individuals to support them to manage their debts; this might result in agreeing a reduced rate of deduction or, in exceptional cases, suspending repayments. Individuals impacted by the pandemic may have contacted the department seeking a reduction in, or suspension of, their rate of repayment, had the department not suspended all recovery.

Processing of newly identified overpayments was also suspended, and we are unable to accurately estimate the rate of repayment that would have been negotiated given the impact of the pandemic.

Additionally, as we recommenced recovery, changes to individual circumstances may have led to a lower rate of repayment than was in place prior to the pandemic.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

TREASURY

■ PAYE

Stephen Morgan:

[\[162286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of HMRC's enforcement of agency regulations collecting PAYE tax from agencies who have had registered contractors.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 March 2023. The correct answer should have been:

John Glen Victoria Atkins:

The UK Government and devolved administrations agreed an Apprenticeship Levy funding deal, based on population share.

Under this agreement, the UK Government uplifted Spending Review 2015 settlements as set out in Block Grant Transparency to ensure the devolved administrations received a full population share of forecast Levy funding from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This population share amounted to £1.3 billion across all three devolved administrations over the three-year period, with £460 million allocated in 2019-20.

Beyond 2019-20, it was agreed that the normal operation of the population-based Barnett formula would deliver a similarly fair outcome rather than a bespoke arrangement being required.

The devolved administrations received record settlements at the 2021 Spending Review and are well funded to deliver devolved responsibilities. Those settlements are still growing in real terms this year, and over the three-year spending review period, despite inflation being higher than expected.

It is for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their funding in devolved areas.

I refer the Honorable Member to the answer that I gave on 7 March 2022 to the Honorable Member for Enfield, Southgate (UIN 156216).

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ **Post Office: Compensation for Horizon Scandal**

Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business (Kevin Hollinrake):

[\[HCWS664\]](#)

The Post Office Horizon scandal, which began over 20 years ago, has had a devastating impact on the lives of many postmasters. Starting in the late 1990s, the Post Office began installing Horizon accounting software, but faults in the software led to shortfalls in branches' accounts. The Post Office demanded sub-postmasters cover the shortfalls, and in many cases wrongfully prosecuted them for false accounting or theft.

The High Court Group Litigation Order case against the Post Office brought by 555 postmasters exposed the scandal. The House will know that Sir Wyn Williams is now chairing a statutory Inquiry to establish what went wrong and identify those who were responsible for what has happened.

The settlement of the High Court case ensured that postmasters who had not been party to it would receive proper compensation through what is now the Historical Shortfall Scheme. However, Group Litigation Order postmasters had much of their compensation taken up by the associated costs of funding their case and they were ineligible to access further compensation through the Historical Shortfall Scheme. This meant that they received less than those in similar circumstances who were not party to the case. Government has agreed to run an additional compensation scheme to put this right and to allow Group Litigation Order postmasters to access similar compensation as that available to their Historical Shortfall Scheme peers in similar circumstances.

On 7 December the then Secretary of State announced the outline of the scheme. Since then, a great deal of work has been done to finalise the details, drawing on helpful input from the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance and claimants' legal representatives as well as utilising lessons learned from the Historical Shortfall Scheme and compensation for those with Overturned Historical Convictions. On 10 February the Government published a tariff (agreed with claimants' lawyers) for reasonable legal fees and a registration form.

In December we announced an independent Advisory Board on the scheme chaired by Professor Christopher Hodges and includes Lord Arbuthnot, Professor Richard Moorhead and the Rt Hon Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones MP), all of whom have long been distinguished campaigners for postmasters. I am pleased to report that the Advisory Board has met three times: reports of its meetings are on gov.uk.

We also said that we would follow an alternative dispute resolution model delivered by the Government. I can report today that we have appointed Dentons as our independent claims facilitators. Their role will be to promote fair and prompt resolutions of each case. We have also appointed Addleshaw Goddard to act as my Department's external legal

advisors on the scheme. They will take a collaborative approach ensuring there is no place for aggressive litigation in resolving claims.

I am delighted to tell the House that the scheme is open to receive claims from today. Details of how to submit claims can be found on gov.uk. Our legal powers to pay compensation run out in August 2024, but we certainly hope to make payments much faster than that: as the then Secretary of State told the House in December, we hope that most cases can be resolved before the end of 2023. I am placing in the Library of the House documentation on the scheme.

I am further pleased to report that the Statutory Instrument exempting Group Litigation Order compensation from income tax, National Insurance contributions and Capital Gains Tax was laid before the Commons on 23 February and came into force on 16 March.

Historical Shortfall Scheme

I am also pleased to provide an update on Post Office's progress in delivering compensation to those in the Historical Shortfall Scheme. I am pleased to see the progress that Post Office has made in delivering compensation to postmasters. As of 21 March, 98% of eligible claimants have been issued offers of compensation, totalling £90.2m. Post Office are working to issue offers to remaining claimants as soon as possible.

Post Office has also received 231 late claims to date, with 15 offers issued so far.

I also recognise the concerns that have been raised in recent weeks around the tax position of claimants in the Historical Shortfall Scheme. It has always been the intention of the scheme to return postmasters to the position they should have been had they not been affected by the Horizon issues. The Government wants to see fair compensation for all victims and my Department is working urgently to address this issue with the Post Office, HM Treasury and HMRC.

Overtured Historical Convictions

I am also pleased to provide an update on Post Office's progress in delivering compensation to those with overtured historical convictions.

As of 20 March, Post Office had paid out over £17.6m in compensation. 79 of the 84 postmasters with overtured historical convictions had received interim payments, totalling over £10.2m. Post Office has reached full and final settlement with 4 postmasters. In order to deliver compensation as quickly as possible, Post Office is handling non-pecuniary and pecuniary claims separately.

A further 63 non-pecuniary claims had been received, of which all but three had received offers. 49 of these had been paid and settled, with one more claim paid, subject to settlement paperwork, which will bring the total to 50, once received.

In addition to the 4 full and final settlements, Post Office had made pecuniary settlement offers to 4 of the 9 postmasters who had submitted a pecuniary claim.

JUSTICE**■ Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements: a consultation on resolving private family disputes earlier through family mediation**

Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab):

[\[HCWS666\]](#)

Today, the Government is launching a consultation that will inform proposals to support more families, in appropriate cases, to agree their children and financial arrangements without court involvement.

Family courts are under unprecedented pressure. In recent years, more families than ever before are applying to the court to resolve their disputes about children and financial matters, and once at court their cases are taking longer to be resolved. We believe that many of these disputes can be successfully resolved outside of court, and in supporting this we can spare families and especially children the anguish of protracted litigation. Resolving more disputes outside of court will also help enable the courts to focus available resource on the cases which need to be there, including where domestic abuse is evidenced or there are urgent issues, and ensure these are resolved swiftly. This will help us to deliver on the Levelling Up agenda by ensuring we improve the experience of parents across the country, including the most deprived areas.

Key proposals in the consultation include:

- Supporting parents to resolve their children and financial arrangements without court involvement: we propose to strengthen access to resources and guidance for parents/carers and separating couples, and seek views on requiring parents/carers, in appropriate cases, to attend a co-parenting programme alongside mediation to help them better understand their family's options.
- Resolving private family law arrangements through mediation: we propose to introduce a requirement, in appropriate cases, to make a reasonable attempt to mediate before applying to court. We are seeking views on how this could operate, and the circumstances which should make an individual or family exempt from the requirement. We propose that government would fund the cost of this mediation for child arrangement cases and seek views on the funding of mediation for finance cases.
- Accountability and costs in court proceedings : We are also consulting on how costs orders could be used by the family courts to enforce requirements to mediate and discourage unnecessary prolonging of court proceedings.

The consultation also seeks views on the impact these proposals may have on the mediation sector, and the role of other forms of dispute resolution in family cases.

We want to hear from a range of people with experience of the Private Family Law system, including families with experience of family courts, the organisations that work to support them, and the professionals who work within the system sector. We will be

holding a number of stakeholder engagement events to ensure we receive detailed responses from a wide range of people and organisations.

The consultation is available at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>

The consultation closes on 15th June 2023.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Freeports in Wales

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS665\]](#)

Today the UK and Welsh governments have jointly announced that there will be two new Freeports in Wales: Celtic Freeport and Anglesey Freeport.

This is an important moment for people across Wales. Freeport status will support the creation of high skilled jobs, drive growth and level up parts of our great country that have been previously overlooked. Each Freeport, subject to business case, will be backed by up to £26 million in UK Government funding, and a range of tax incentives, including locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside a generous package of trade and innovation support for businesses locating there.

These two new Freeports will unlock significant funding for Wales, helping to boost the economy and ensuring the benefits are felt from Anglesey to Port Talbot and Milford Haven. They will help to create tens of thousands of new jobs, boost business, and unleash potentially billions of pounds of investment in the local areas and beyond. The strong bids from the Celtic and Anglesey sites compellingly demonstrated how they will use Freeport status to regenerate their local communities, establish hubs for global trade, and foster an innovative environment.

Freeports are at the vanguard of Levelling Up: driving growth and bringing opportunity and prosperity to the communities that surround them. The new Freeports in Wales will build on the UK Government's successful Freeport programme in England, where all eight Freeports are open for business, and in Scotland where two new Green Freeports have recently been announced.

This Government remains committed to ensuring that the whole of the UK can reap the benefits of our Freeports programme. As well as Freeports being set up in England, Scotland and Wales, we also continue discussions with stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how best to deliver the benefits associated with Freeports there.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Annual Statistics on Incomes and Living Conditions 2021/22****The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mel Stride):**[\[HCWS667\]](#)

The Department for Work and Pensions has today published its annual statistics on incomes and living standards covering 2021/22. This includes Households Below Average Income (HBAI), which contains estimates of household incomes and a range of low-income indicators for 2021/22, derived from the Family Resources Survey. Further publications in today's release are: Income Dynamics, Pensioners' Income Series, Children in Low Income Families, Improving Lives Indicators, Separated Families Statistics and the Family Resources Survey. These publications cover the four statutory measures of child poverty required to be published by DWP under the 2010 Child Poverty Act.

This Government has overseen significant falls in absolute poverty since 2009/10, largely driven by increases in labour market participation, with 3.8 million more people currently in employment and sustained improvements to the National Living Wage which will increase to £10.42 per hour from April. There were 1.7 million fewer people in absolute low income and the rate has fallen by 4 per cent after housing costs in 2021/22 compared to 2009/10. This includes 400,000 fewer children, 1 million fewer working age adults and 200,000 fewer pensioners.

Between 2020/21 and 2021/22, median income grew by £8 per week in real terms but there was a slight increase in the number of people in absolute low income. This was driven by increases in the numbers of pensioners in absolute low income, due to lower occupational pension income and higher inflation than in the previous year, impacting the value of the State Pension. For working age people, absolute poverty rates were unchanged, with strong earnings growth offsetting the impact of the withdrawal of the unprecedented levels of Government support to protect incomes and jobs during the pandemic.

Building on the food insecurity data which this Government first published in 2019/20, we are publishing official estimates of foodbank use for the first time. In 2021/22, 3% (0.8m households) had used a food bank on at least one occasion in the past year. HBAI recorded that less than 0.1m pensioner households used a food bank in the past year. In 2021/22 7% of individuals, or 4.7m people, were living in households classed as food insecure, down from 8% in 2019/20.

These statistics are for 2021/22 so do not reflect the impact of the cost of living challenges caused by Putin's illegal war and global supply chain pressures. We recognised the pressures households faced as a result and acted, providing substantial cost of living support in 2022-23 including Cost of Living payments worth up to £650 for those on means-tested benefits, £150 for eligible disabled people and £300 for Pensioner households. At Autumn Statement 2022, the Government announced benefits and pensions uprating of 10.1%, the largest ever cash increase to the National Living Wage and generous cost of living support for 2023-24. This included additional Cost of Living

Payments for more than 8 million households on means-tested benefits, 6 million people on disability benefits, and 8 million pensioner households across the UK. It also included an additional £1 billion, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England, to help households with the cost of essentials. As announced at the Spring Budget, to further support households with the cost of living, the Government is maintaining the Energy Price Guarantee at £2,500 for a further three months, from April 2023.

This Government is committed to obtaining the best evidence to ensure policies are targeted at helping the most vulnerable in our society. Last year a suite of further material deprivation measures were published. To further improve the evidence base, the Government is resuming work to develop experimental statistics based on the Social Metrics Commission's innovative work on poverty measurement.