



## Daily Report

Tuesday, 28 March 2023

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 March 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:38 P.M., 28 March 2023). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Barristers: Fees and Charges

**Janet Daby:**

[R] [\[170738\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what her Department's policy is on the parity of fees for prosecution and defence counsels.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

EQUALITY OF ARMS BETWEEN DEFENCE AND PROSECUTION IS AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE WITHIN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S INCREASE TO DEFENCE COUNSEL FEES, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CRIMINAL LEGAL AID, THIS GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO UPLIFT THE FEES CPS PAYS TO PROSECUTION COUNSEL. THIS FUNDING RESTORES PARITY BETWEEN DEFENCE AND PROSECUTION COUNSEL.

#### ■ Sentencing

**Janet Daby:**

[R] [\[171541\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme on allowing victims of crime to seek appeals of sentencing.

**Michael Tomlinson:**

THE UNDULY LENIENT SENTENCE SCHEME IS AN IMPORTANT MECHANISM TO ENSURE THAT VICTIMS OF CRIME CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED. THE VICTIMS' CODE ENTITLES VICTIMS TO BE INFORMED ABOUT THE SCHEME, PROMPTLY AFTER SENTENCE, SO THAT THEY MAY REFER SENTENCES FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE LAW OFFICERS WITHIN THE TIME LIMIT. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE RECEIVES REQUESTS TO REVIEW SENTENCES FROM VICTIMS; THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS; THE CPS; THE POLICE; MPs AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. IN 2022, 139 SENTENCES WERE REFERRED TO THE COURT OF APPEAL AND IN 95 CASES (68%), SENTENCES WERE INCREASED.

**BUSINESS AND TRADE****■ Employment Tribunals Service****Dan Jarvis:**[\[904348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department plans to implement the Law Commission's April 2020 recommendation on extending to six months the time limit for bringing any employment tribunal claim.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023, UIN 170606.

**■ Exports****Nick Thomas-Symonds:**[\[166285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility publication entitled Economic and fiscal outlook, published in March 2023, what assessment his Department has made of the sectors most likely to be impacted by the 6.6 per cent fall in exports in 2023 referenced in that document.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Growing UK exports to reach £1 trillion by 2030 is at the centre of the UK's export ambitions, with all sectors of the economy needing to contribute to this shared goal.

The UK's Export Strategy is addressing barriers to exporting through a 12-point plan.

**■ Import Duties: Caribbean****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[170568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether he plans to take steps to remove tariffs on goods and services from Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The UK has a comprehensive trade agreement with all 12 Caribbean Commonwealth countries covering both goods and services. The [UK-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement](#) provides immediate duty-free quota-free access to the UK market for all goods from partner Caribbean States, except arms and ammunition.

The Agreement also provides CARIFORUM partners access to the majority of UK service sectors and opens most services in the UK and CARIFORUM to investment. Under the agreement the UK has committed to allowing specific categories of professional employees of CARIFORUM firms and self-employed CARIFORUM professionals in specific sectors, to enter the UK to supply services.

**■ Small Businesses: Cost of Living****Jim Shannon:**[\[166225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps she is taking to help ensure that small and medium-sized businesses remain viable in the context of the increases in the cost of living .

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Businesses will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average and raising the Employment Allowance to £5000. In addition, the Spring Budget provides further cost of living support to households by freezing fuel duty and maintaining the 5p cut for a further year.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme has protected SMEs from high energy costs over the winter and eligible businesses will continue to benefit through the Energy Bill Discount Schemes. The Autumn Statement announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

**Small Businesses: Government Assistance****Bill Esterson:**[\[172388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she plans to take to support small and medium sized businesses with the effects of trends in the level of (a) inflation and (b) energy costs.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

Government recognises the impact of increased costs on small businesses and is freezing the business rates multiplier for another year, worth £9.3 billion over the next 5 years. Small to medium sized businesses will have also benefitted from a range of government measures, including reversal of the National Insurance rise, cut to fuel duty for 24 months, support via the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and an increase in the Employment Allowance to £5,000.

**Trade Agreements: India****Emily Thornberry:**[\[170565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether steps to prevent online and telephone fraud have been discussed during the free trade negotiations with India.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[170566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the draft treaty text of the free trade agreement with India on digital services and data would preclude the Government from taking unilateral action to block Voice over Internet Protocol phone calls to UK households, made from overseas using spoofed UK numbers.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

A free trade agreement with India offers the opportunity to deepen our already strong trade relationship.

We are seeking an agreement that benefits both businesses and consumers. This includes commitments on the protection of core consumer rights, and advancing digital consumer rights, such as seeking access to redress and reducing spam.

Round 8 is currently taking place in India, and we will provide the House with an update on negotiations after the round. We do not discuss details of live negotiations,



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

## ■ Trade Promotion

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[169279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2023 to Question 136628 on Trade Promotion, for what reason her Department does not hold data on the involvement of the UK diaspora in trade delegations.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The Department for Business & Trade take a number of factors into account when identifying attendees for trade delegations. These are predominantly commercial considerations – which UK businesses or stakeholders will most benefit from involvement or can most effectively support the UK's objectives. Knowledge and experience of a specific market would be one consideration, but we do not collect data on the diaspora of attendees.

## ■ Travel: Trading Standards

**Siobhain McDonagh:**

[\[163698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that trading standards are being upheld (a) in the travel industry and (b) with regard to travel agents who sell flights to customers.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

There is a robust legal framework in place to protect consumers and uphold trading standards. The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 provide additional bespoke protections for package holiday bookings. Traders, including travel agents, must comply with consumer protection law, which is enforced by Local Authority trading standards teams and the Competition and Markets Authority

The Department engages regularly with Trading Standards and the Competition and Markets Authority to discuss consumer and trading issues. The framework is kept under review to ensure it continues to provide effective consumer protection.

## ■ UK Export Finance

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[167063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the announcement by UK Export Finance on 24 May 2022 of its support for construction of the Ankara-Izmir High Speed Railway, what funds guaranteed to Credit Suisse under the Buyer Credit facility used to finance the project are outstanding as of 16 March 2023.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[167064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, how many outstanding arrangements UK Export Finance has with (a) Credit Suisse and (b) any of its

subsidiaries on the provision of (i) buyer credit facilities, (ii) lines of credit, (iii) standard buyer loan guarantees and (iv) bills and notes guarantees as of 16 March 2023.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has no exposure against Credit Suisse. Credit Suisse is not a buyer, or borrower, and nor is it acting as a guarantor for a buyer or borrower that is relying upon UKEF support in any transaction.

UKEF has provided its guarantee to the lenders for the Ankara-Izmir High Speed Railway project, which guarantees them against non-payment of principal and interest from the Borrower. Consequently, UKEF has no liability arising from Credit Suisse's participation in that project.

■ **US-EU Task Force on the Inflation Reduction Act**

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[170647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent discussions she has had with his counterparts in the US-EU Task Force on the Inflation Reduction Act on the potential impact of the Inflation Reduction Act on the UK economy.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** [\[170648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make it her policy to ensure that the UK joins the US-EU Task Force on the Inflation Reduction Act.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are having regular discussions with the US to represent the interests of UK firms and ensure the UK benefits from any flexibilities in the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act. The Prime Minister raised UK concerns in his meeting earlier this month with President Biden and the DBT Secretary of State has recently had calls with Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai. We will continue to work with the US bilaterally on this issue, as well as engaging closely with other key trade partners, including the EU.

■ **Working Hours: Health**

**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[167048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing guidance for employers on promoting the health and wellbeing for night shift workers.

**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: Aviation****Emily Thornberry:****[169228]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, 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 such flights were members of (a) the media and (b) business delegations included in the travelling party.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The requested information is not centrally held. Details of Ministerial and Senior Officials' flights are available on [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk)

It is important that Ministers are able to work while they are travelling to make best use of their time. To facilitate this, the department always seeks best value for money for the taxpayer. This has been the case under successive administrations of all parties.

**■ Cabinet Office: Legal Opinion****Angela Rayner:****[169314]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March to Question 165342, how much his Department spent on external (a) legal firms and (b) counsel in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Cabinet Office predominantly receives legal advice in-house from Government Legal Department, and the information requested, in respect of external advice, in the question is not centrally held.

**■ Charities: Operating Costs****Barbara Keeley:****[170572]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has made to ensure charities contracted by (a) government departments, (b) local authorities and (c) NHS bodies to deliver public services can pay their operational costs including paying a fair wage.

**Alex Burghart:**

It is a legal obligation that employers pay the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage, introduced by this Conservative Government, and the National Minimum Wage for workers under 23. Departments can also require suppliers to pay above these rates, such as the London Living Wage, where it is relevant to do so.

UK public procurement policy is to award contracts on the basis of value for money, which means the optimum combination of cost and quality over the lifetime of the project.

The Sourcing Playbook sets out the Government's policies with regards to outsourcing. It was introduced to improve decision making and the quality of

contracts government places with suppliers. The Playbook is focussed on getting things right from the start, and includes 11 key policies which help government and industry work together to deliver high quality public services while maximising value for money.

By getting things right from the start and driving better contracting with the private sector, the playbook policies prioritise high quality outcomes, whilst also driving efficiencies and savings.

## ■ Civil Servants: Workplace Pensions

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**

[\[169220\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the potential costs of amending the Principal Civil Service Pensions Classic Scheme to grant full survivors pensions rights to those who retired before 1 October 2002.

**Alex Burghart:**

The pensions of widows, widowers and surviving civil partners, under the Classic section of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS), cease if they remarry or cohabit. In 2018, the Government Actuary's Department estimated the extra cost of paying all survivor pensions, regardless of remarriage or cohabitation and when it occurred. The estimated extra cost in 2018 was around £550m for reinstating pensions that had already ceased and an annual future cost of around £30m for stopping the practice going forward. The estimate was a simplified approximation based on an earlier estimate done in 2006.

Under the Classic section of the PCSPS, survivors' pensions are only payable to a widow, widower or surviving civil partner. The cost of extending survivor benefits to unmarried partners under Classic has not been estimated explicitly but, in 2018, the Government Actuary's Department estimated that the total capital cost of extending such benefits across all public service pension schemes (including the PCSPS) would be £2.5 - 4.5bn.

The Classic section was costed, and contribution rates set, on the basis of provisions which reflected social attitudes in 1972. Changes to the survivor pension arrangements from 1 October 2002, when the Premium section of the PCSPS was introduced, were paid for by active members. It would not be appropriate to extend these to members who retired before that date, as successive Governments have concluded that retrospective improvements of this kind to public service pensions should not be made at taxpayers expense.

## ■ EU Law: Bureaucracy

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[166122\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish any documents held by his Department on the estimated red tape costs of implementing EU legislation from 2011 to 2020.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Government does not hold this information centrally and on a fully comparable basis.

Each Government Department is responsible for its own Retained EU Laws (REUL).

**■ Government Departments: Contracts****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[167134\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many outsourcing contracts the Government has in place broken down by (a) central Government, (b) defence, (c) the NHS, (d) local government, (e) schools and (f) wider education; and what the total value is of those contracts by each category.

**Alex Burghart:**

**This information is not held centrally.**

**■ Government Departments: Staff****Emily Thornberry:**[\[166164\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the press release entitled The GPA rated best UK public sector workplace experience, published by the Government Property Agency on 15 March 2023, which (a) Departments and (b) executive agencies have undertaken Leesman Office surveys since 1 January 2020 to assess the views of their staff concerning the main offices in which they work.

**Alex Burghart:**

1. GPA has launched 9 office based surveys with Leesman, starting in January 2021. The full list of departments, agencies and bodies as listed as such on the UK Government Departments, agencies and public bodies website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>) that have taken part in Leesman surveys through GPA can be found below:
  - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
  - Cabinet Office
  - Care Quality Commission
  - Companies House
  - Consumer Council For Water
  - Criminal Cases Review Commission
  - Crown Commercial Service
  - Crown Prosecution Service
  - Defence Equipment and Support
  - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
  - Department for Education

- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
- Department for International Trade
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Department for Work & Pensions
- Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency
- Environment Agency
- Government Internal Audit Agency
- Government Legal Department
- Government Property Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- Health Education England
- Health Research Authority
- HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS)
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
- HM Treasury
- Home Office
- Homes England
- Infrastructure and Projects Authority
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee
- Legal Aid Agency
- Ministry of Defence (MOD)
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
- Natural England
- NHS
- NHS England
- Office for National Statistics
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
- Office of Rail and Road
- Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman
- Regulator of Social Housing
- Serious Fraud Office

- Small Business Commissioner
- Submarine Delivery Agency (SDA)
- Trade Remedies Authority
- UK Health Security Agency

Other organisations/groups:

- Asylum Protection
- Border Force
- Government Art collection
- HM Passport Office
- Immigration Enforcement (IE)
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
- Pubs Code Adjudicator
- Single Competent Authority (SCA)
- UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

#### ■ Home Office: Media

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[171574\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential impact of the Government Communications Service Propriety Guidance on determining which news organisations to invite on Departmental visits.

**Jeremy Quin:**

No.

#### ■ Peters and Peters

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[172431\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many hours of legal services Peters and Peters has provided in relation to the Privileges Committee investigation of the Rt hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

**Jeremy Quin:**

It would not be appropriate for the Cabinet Office to comment in this level of detail on the contract with Peters and Peters given the commercial and legal sensitivities.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[172432\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2023 to Question 165342 on Cabinet Office: Legal Opinion, if he will publish details of the competed framework used when tendering the legal services contract to Peters and

Peters in relation to the Privileges Committee investigation of the rt Hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Information about the contract between the Cabinet Office and Peters & Peters can be found on ContractsFinder at the following link:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/26bfbb02-7e5b-4500-9746-6513393bfd27>.

## ■ Public Sector: Industrial Disputes

**Daniel Zeichner:** [167140]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many disputes on outsourced public service contracts have been referred to ACAS in the last three years.

**Alex Burghart:**

**This information is not held centrally.**

## ■ Public Sector: Procurement

**Daniel Zeichner:** [167141]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the potential practice of public bodies using procurement to reduce costs and cost-shifting to other public sector budgets.

**Alex Burghart:**

This Government knows that excellence in procurement practice is essential to delivering high quality services for the public.

The Sourcing Playbook sets out the Government's policies with regards to outsourcing.

Its introduction by this Conservative Government improves decision making and the quality of contracts government places with industry. The playbook is focussed on getting things right from the start, and includes 11 key policies which help government and industry work together to deliver high quality public services and emphasises that government contracts are let on the basis of value for money.

**Daniel Zeichner:** [167142]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the impact of improved procurement and contracting terms on (a) costs to contracts and (b) value for money.

**Alex Burghart:**

By getting things right from the start and driving better contracting with the private sector, the playbook policies prioritise high quality outcomes, whilst also driving efficiencies and savings. The Government Commercial Functions cashable and non-cashable benefits are included in the Government efficiency savings, 2021 published



on GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-efficiency-savings-2021/government-efficiency-savings-2021>)

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Arts: EU Countries

**Carol Monaghan:**

[171451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had discussions with her counterparts in the European Union on introducing a new visa which would allow people in the creative industries to spend more than 90 days consecutively working in EU countries.

**Julia Lopez:**

This Government recognises the importance of the UK's creative and cultural industries, not only to the economy and international reputation of the United Kingdom, but also to the wellbeing and enrichment of its people. We want musicians and performers to be able to tour abroad easily.

EU Member States are principally responsible for deciding the rules governing what work UK visitors can undertake in each Member State. That is why we have engaged with EU Member States about the importance of touring; most recently raised at the EU-UK Partnership Council in March. From these discussions, almost all Member States have confirmed they offer visa and work permit free routes for musicians and creative performers, many for up to 90 days. This includes most of the UK's biggest touring markets such as France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.

Beyond these exemptions, creatives are required to obtain the relevant visa or work permit for the relevant Member State, as artists from other third countries are required to do. We have developed guidance on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/visas-for-creative-workers) to support artists to understand the visa and permit requirements for medium and long term stays in Member States.

The Government is committed to supporting the sector to adapt to these new arrangements, and we continue to work with the sector and directly with Member States to clarify what creative workers need to do.

### ■ BBC Parliament

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

[172370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had discussions with the BBC on coverage of the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd on BBC Parliament.

**Julia Lopez:**

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent, and the Government has no say on the BBC's day-to-day decisions, including on the content it shows. Any decisions on this matter are for the BBC to take independently.

**■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Minimum Wage****Justin Madders:** [\[171435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2023 to Question 155151 on the Minimum Wage, what the total value of the contracts with the firms named in the list amount to.

**Julia Lopez:**

Details of all government contracts, including the total contract value, above £10,000 for the core Department and above £25,000 for the wider public sector, are published to [Contracts Finder](#) as part of the Department's commitment to transparency.

**■ Gambling****Simon Lightwood:** [\[172551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking before publishing the gambling white paper; and when she plans to publish that paper.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Gambling Act Review is wide-ranging and aims to ensure that gambling regulation is fit for the digital age. We are finalising a White Paper setting out our conclusions and next steps and will publish it in due course.

**■ Gambling: Payment Methods****Jo Gideon:** [\[171578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of running trials on the use of cashless payments for the land-based gambling sector.

**Stuart Andrew:**

The Government is reviewing the Gambling Act 2005 to make sure it is fit for the digital age. Secondary legislation (The Gaming Machine (Circumstances of Use) Regulations 2007) currently prohibits the direct use of debit cards for payment on gaming machines. However, cashless payments via digital apps, ticket in ticket out systems and debit card payments at cash desks are currently permitted in the land-based gambling sector. It is also possible to pay for chips at a casino gaming table by turning away from the table and completing a debit card transaction with a staff member.

We are considering issues around payment methods as part of our wide-ranging Review and will publish a White Paper setting out our conclusions and next steps in due course.

## ■ Leisure: Energy

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[172409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of leisure centres that will receive financial support for energy bills, as part of the package of measures announced in the Spring Budget 2023.

**Stuart Andrew:**

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. Eligibility criteria for the fund will be published shortly, which will determine the number of beneficiaries through a competitive process. The Government intends for community and charitable trusts to be eligible for support.

## ■ Music Venues: Ownership

**Bill Esterson:**

[\[172327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to assist people managing small music venues to acquire the freehold ownership of those venues in order to create protected leaseholds.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government is committed to supporting our grassroots music venues, which are the lifeblood and research and development centres of our world-leading music sector.

The Music Venues Trust created Music Venue Properties and launched the 'Own Our Venues' campaign in June 2022. The campaign is currently raising funds to take control of the freeholds of music venue premises and bring them under a protected status of benevolent ownership. The Government is supportive of this industry-led initiative and welcomes the sector seeking solutions to ensure the longevity of the UK's beloved music venues. Minister Lopez is meeting Music Venues Trust shortly to discuss issues facing the live music sector, and how to support growth of the music sector and wider Creative Industries.

## ■ Television: Production

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[169291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department are taking steps to encourage British television productions to film in Northern Ireland.

**Julia Lopez:**

With world-class facilities and access to a highly-skilled talent pool, Northern Ireland enjoys global recognition as an important production centre for film and television.

Northern Ireland Screen is the national screen agency for Northern Ireland. Funded by the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities, Northern

Ireland Screen's production credits include the Academy Award nominated film Belfast.

The British Film Institute NETWORK works to support, develop and champion new and emerging filmmakers across the UK. The BFI will continue to delegate funding to Northern Ireland Screen to lead BFI NETWORK in Northern Ireland, with an award of £480,000 across the three years.

To support independent screen content following the pandemic, including film, to grow internationally the government launched the UK Global Screen Fund in April 2021. DCMS has committed a further £21 million to develop, distribute and promote independent UK screen content in international markets. All three strands of the UK Global Screen Fund offer support for Northern Irish companies and projects and several significant awards to Northern Ireland-based companies have been made to date.

DCMS has funded the British Film Commission (BFC) with £4.8 million over three years to support the growth of seven geographic production hubs across the UK nations. Through this, the BFC has provided ongoing support for Northern Ireland's expanding studio infrastructure initiative, including design support and general guidance to four key studios: Belfast Harbour, Titanic, Loop and Silverwood.

The BBC, ITV and Channel 4 have also all commissioned critically acclaimed television programmes set and produced in Northern Ireland. This includes Bloodlands, The Secret and Derry Girls.

At Spring Budget 2023, the government went further to support and boost the competitiveness of the TV industry across the UK, through the creative industry tax reliefs. The government announced that the film, high end TV, children's TV and animation tax reliefs will be reformed to a single Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit, which will provide a greater benefit than the current reliefs.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**John Healey:**

**[169188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total number of decisions taken on applications through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme was since its establishment on 1 April 2021.

**James Heappey:**

As of 20 March 2023, decisions have been reached on approximately 21,010 unique applications since the start of the ARAP scheme. Of these unique applications, approximately 3,393 were found eligible and 17,617 were ineligible. All figures provided are from a live database and are subject to change.

Applicants to the ARAP scheme often submit multiple applications, so reaching a decision on one unique application closes other open applications submitted by the same applicant.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[169297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether flights to the UK for people in Pakistan who are eligible under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy have been suspended.

**James Heappey:**

We continue to accommodate and support ARAP eligible people in Pakistan while they await relocation to the UK. When relocation becomes possible for individuals or family groups, we use commercial flights to bring individuals to the UK.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[169298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people eligible under (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan citizens resettlement scheme accommodated by the British High Commission in Islamabad are under the age of 18.

**James Heappey:**

As of 22 March 2023, there are currently 500 ARAP eligible individuals under the age of 18 accommodated by the British High Commission (BHC) in Islamabad. There are no ACRS-eligible individuals currently accommodated by the BHC in Islamabad.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[169299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people accommodated by the British High Commission in Islamabad have been there for over one year; and what is the longest time spent at the High Commission in Islamabad by someone accommodated in that place.

**James Heappey:**

As of 22 March 2023, there are 63 ARAP-eligible individuals currently accommodated by the British High Commission (BHC) in Islamabad who have been there for longer than one year. The longest time that an ARAP-eligible individual has spent in BHC accommodation in Islamabad is 506 days as of 22 March 2023.

Relocating those eligible under ARAP to the UK as quickly as possible remains a Government priority, but we must carry out necessary checks which can sometimes take a significant amount of time. Furthermore, appropriate preparations in the UK must be made to accommodate and support incoming people with diverse needs.

As people await relocation to the UK, we rightly continue to provide accommodation and welfare support in third countries.

## ■ Ajax Lessons Learned Review

**John Healey:**

[\[152173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the draft report on the AJAX lessons learned was received by his Department.

**Alex Chalk:**

An initial draft of the report on the Ajax Lessons Learned Review was provided at the end of January and continues to be subject to a fact-checking and Maxwellisation exercise as part of the final stages of drafting the report. The Department will publish a finalised report as soon as practicable, accompanied by an oral statement to Parliament.

**John Healey:**[\[172329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Government's proposal to invest £3 billion in the UK's defence nuclear enterprise, how much of that funding will be spent in (a) Barrow, (b) Derby and (c) AWE establishments.

**Alex Chalk:**

Of the £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister, £3 billion in additional funding will be invested across the defence nuclear enterprise.

The Department is currently working through the allocation of this funding .

**■ Ajax Vehicles****John Healey:**[\[172340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the AJAX vehicles can now fire while moving.

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to Question 87761 on 18 November 2022.

**Attachments:**

1. Ajax Vehicles: Testing [UIN 87761.docx]

**John Healey:**[\[172342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there have been any changes made to the contracted AJAX vehicle requirements due to (a) the completion of user validation trials and (b) the start of reliability and growth trials.

**Alex Chalk:**

There have been no changes to the contracted Ajax system requirements due to the completion of User Validation Trials or the start of Reliability Growth Trials. User Validation Trials were to confirm that the modifications to the vehicle met the extant contracted legislative requirements for noise and vibration. Reliability Growth Trials are part of the original contract.

**■ Ajax Vehicles: Contracts****John Healey:**[\[172339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 20 March 2023, HCWS652 on Ajax Payments Update, what the total cost was of the user validations trials for the AJAX programme.

**John Healey:**

[\[172975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the written statement entitled Ajax Payments Update, UIN HCWS652, made by the Minister for Defence Procurement on 20 March 2023, who met or will meet the costs of the user validation trials for the AJAX programme.

**Alex Chalk:**

The User Validation Trials were bespoke trials to establish the effectiveness of the proposed Ajax modifications, conducted jointly with General Dynamics. General Dynamics bore all of their costs associated with this activity and the Ministry of Defence bore approximately £650,000 in costs for the preparation, execution and analysis of the independent monitoring and instrumentation necessary for these joint trials.

## ■ **Ajax Vehicles: Le TacCIS Programme**

**John Healey:**

[\[172341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the AJAX vehicles are required to have Morpheus installed on their platforms to reach (a) initial operating capability and (b) full operating capability.

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given on 6 December 2022 to Question 98709.

### **Attachments:**

1. Ajax Vehicles: LE TacCIS Programme [UIN 98709.docx]

## ■ **Armed Forces: Conditions of Employment**

**Alex Davies-Jones:**

[\[172546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Armed Forces Personnel figures published on 22 March 2023, what steps his Department is taking to (a) improve the working conditions and (b) retain personnel in the armed forces.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is examining our Service personnel's terms and conditions under the 'Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation'. This review builds on significant modernisation and improvement to working conditions which has already been made in recent years, including the expansion of flexible working policies and the introduction of wraparound childcare.

The MOD recognises that reforming and enhancing our working conditions also improves retention by expanding further on our already strong offer. Measures to attract and retain personnel include a competitive salary, a non-contributory pension (the last such major scheme in the public sector), subsidised accommodation, a range of allowances on top of basic salary, strong career and progression prospects, and training and development opportunities.

## ■ Armed Forces: Housing

**John Healey:**

[\[169207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the letter from the Minister for Defence Procurement dated 20 March 2023 promised in the Answer of 27 February to Question 146792 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many of the 154 SFA properties that were not allocated due to damp and mould issues in December 2022 (a) have had work completed to resolve the damp or mould issues, (b) have begun work to resolve the damp or mould issues; and c) are still waiting for work to begin to resolve damp or mould issues.

**Alex Chalk:**

Extensive works are required to address the underlying cause of the damp and mould in the 154 unallocated Service Family Accommodation properties. These properties will remain vacant until the issues are addressed.

Planning has begun in all cases; surveys have been instructed and requirements are being scoped. The outcome of the planning stage will determine the necessary works, which will then be put out to tender.

The Ministry of Defence aim to have these 154 properties ready for allocation to families in the summer of 2023. This will be subject to the confirmation of funding to complete these remediation works, and the necessary ecology licences being granted by local authorities.

## ■ Armed Forces: Procurement

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[172347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many military officers are Senior Responsible Owners.

**Alex Chalk:**

There are 23 military Senior Responsible Owners of the 54 defence programmes contained within the Government Major Projects Portfolio.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[172348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of his Department's procurement programmes are overseen by a Senior Responsible Owner.

**Alex Chalk:**

All defence programmes in the Government Major Projects Portfolio have a senior responsible owner appointed in line with Infrastructure and Projects Authority best practice.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[172349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many senior responsible owners who are military officers derived from the (a) Army, (b) Royal Air Force, (c) Royal Navy and (d) Royal Marines as of 1 March 2023.



**Alex Chalk:**

The following table provides a breakdown of Military Officers by Service who are Senior Responsible Owners of defence projects in the Government Major Projects Portfolio:

ARMY	1
Royal Air Force	7
Royal Navy excluding Royal Marines	15
Royal Marines	Nil
Total	23

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[172351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what specific qualifications in project management are senior responsible owners required to have before being appointed.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority Capability framework for Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) identifies typical qualifications and professional memberships but these are not mandated. The department does not centrally direct specific qualifications in project management for SROs but these are encouraged to be specified in individual job roles.

However, candidates for Government Major Projects Portfolio SRO roles are expected above all to demonstrate proven experience of managing high value/high profile projects and/or programmes.

Nonetheless, in a recent central recruitment campaign for 10 SROs the Department required candidates to hold one of the following professional qualifications or an equivalent: Managing Successful Programmes; Project Leadership Programme; Major Projects Leadership Academy; Prince2; APM Project Fundamentals.

On appointment, SROs are expected to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy if they have not already done so.

**■ Artillery: Procurement****Julian Knight:**[\[169322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to source artillery from international partners.

**Alex Chalk:**

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

Ownership of the Archer artillery systems will be transferred to the British Army this month and be fully operational by April 2024.

■ **Defence: Employment**

**David Warburton:**

[\[172476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support defence jobs across the UK.

**Alex Chalk:**

The most recent estimate shows Ministry of Defence (MOD) investment supports 219,000 jobs in industries across the UK, including 141,000 direct jobs and 78,000 indirect jobs.

Continued high and focussed investment in defence, along with the changes we are making as part of the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, means that the MOD is well placed to contribute to economic growth and Levelling Up across the Union.

■ **Defence: Industry**

**David Warburton:**

[\[172478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve defence collaboration with industry.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Defence recognises the importance of collaboration, including closer and earlier dialogue with industry. The Defence and Security Industrial Strategy set the framework for a deeper, more sophisticated, and strategic relationship with industry. We are delivering this by strengthening the Defence Suppliers Forum, engaging our largest suppliers through the Strategic Partnering Programme, and focusing on export opportunities through the Defence Growth Partnership. Complementing this work we continue to engage with the defence sector through trade associations, and our outreach activity aimed at Small and Medium Sized Enterprises.

■ **DM Gosport**

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[170728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the (a) size in hectares and (b) Housing Unit Potential of DE&S Gosport.

**Alex Chalk:**

DE&S Gosport is 217.850 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of the site, as it has not been identified for disposal.

## ■ HMS Nelson

**Luke Pollard:** [\[169448\]](#)

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

**Luke Pollard:** [\[169458\]](#)

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

**Luke Pollard:** [\[169460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential of The Royal Citadel, Plymouth is.

**Alex Chalk:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. Redford Barracks [UIN 155024.docx]

## ■ Injuries: Compensation

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[169300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many injury compensation claims submitted to his Department in the UK by (a) Afghan civilian interpreters and (b) other locally employed civilians (i) have been accepted and (ii) are pending more than (A) 6 and (B) 12 months after submission.

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[169301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Afghan civilian interpreters and (b) other locally employed civilians have submitted injury compensation claims to his Department in the UK in each of the last 10 years.

**James Heappey:**

There have been 31 claims to the Ex-Gratia Medical Payments Scheme in the last 10 years that have been either accepted or are pending. We are working on ways to resolve those pending claims as swiftly as possible.

The 31 claims are broken down as follows:

- There are 20 former interpreters who have an outstanding claim, or who have appealed the original decision not to award them a payment under the Ex-Gratia Medical Payments Scheme. Some of the outstanding claims relate to injuries sustained more than ten years ago.
- Of the 20 former interpreters who have an outstanding claim, three were submitted within the last six months. The remaining 17 are pending more than 12 months.
- Eleven former interpreters who worked directly for HMG in Afghanistan and now reside in the UK have made claims within the last 10 years, which have been settled.

Our records show that, of those settled cases, eight claims were made in 2018, one made in 2019 and two made in 2020.

There have been no claims for other locally employed civilians during the last 10 years.

#### ■ **Military Bases: Carbon Emissions**

**John Healey:**

[\[169198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the MoD Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach, whether his Department has cohered all Defence Estate initiatives with clear prioritisation set against Defence's emission reduction targets.

**Alex Chalk:**

Since the publication of the MOD Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach a significant amount of work has been done to understand the implications of our decarbonisation commitments on the Defence Estate. The Strategy for Defence Infrastructure, published in January 2022, sets the ambition for a net zero built estate with a focus on reducing emissions through reducing demand, increasing efficiency, and moving away from fossil fuels. A supporting Estate Sustainability Sub-Strategy is under development, which is already cohering initiatives and will set priorities and policy targets for an holistic approach to decarbonisation of the Estate, and increasing energy security through renewables generation etc.

#### ■ **Military Bases: Sales**

**John Healey:**

[\[169195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Defence Estate Optimisation disposal timelines were as of (a) 2021 and (b) 2022.

**Alex Chalk:**

Please see attached at Annex A and B, which shows the Defence Estate Optimisation (DEO) Disposal Timelines for 2021 and 2022, both pre and post, the Future Soldier Announcement.

The differences in the DEO disposal timelines, relate to the updates made to the Defence Disposal Database in November 2021 following the Future Soldier announcement.

**Attachments:**

1. DEO Disposal timeline [Annex B.pdf]
2. DEO Disposal timeline from 2021 [Annex A.pdf]

**John Healey:**

[\[169196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the NAO report, Optimising the Defence Estate, published on 11 June 2021, when the Defence Infrastructure Organisation began assessing the Defence Estate; and when he expects the mapping to have been completed.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Defence estate has always been and is continually assessed, to align with Defence capability needs and Government demands upon the estate.

**John Healey:**[\[169199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 153692 on Military Bases: Sales, if he will provide a breakdown of the sum raised by Defence Estate disposals, by each site, between 7 November 2016 and 1 March 2023 by each site.

**Alex Chalk:**

While all disposals were managed in accordance with Treasury guidance, it would not be appropriate to release a list breaking down £691 million of sales which include commercially sensitive transactions.

**■ Military Bases: Single People****John Healey:**[\[169197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his baseline plan and budget are for the Single Living Accommodation Management Information System.

**Alex Chalk:**

The current baseline plan for the Single Living Accommodation Information System (SLAMIS) Project can be found below:

- To complete the data gathering activities by June 2023.
- To complete the reporting aspects and manage the transition to Business As Usual (BAU) by September 2023.

The SLAMIS Project is due to complete on 30 September 2023 with an approved budget of £12.83 million.

**■ Ministry of Defence: TikTok****John Healey:**[\[169204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made on the security risks posed by utilising the TikTok app on government devices.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The Ministry of Defence has put in place a block on the use of TikTok on our official mobile devices. In exceptional cases, exemptions to the use of TikTok are permitted, and I have approved a single use of TikTok as a corporate media channel under the direct control of the Directorate of Defence Communications. In agreeing to this exception, we have ensured that the appropriate measures are in place to manage the security risks associated with TikTok. Working closely with the National Cyber Security Centre, we continually assess security risks and ensure that the control measures that protect Defence's people, information and assets remain effective.

**John Healey:**

[\[169205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he had with Cabinet colleagues on the ban of the TikTok app on government devices. before that ban was announced.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Prior to the statement in Parliament by the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster on 16 March 2023, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) was consulted on the extent to which we manage or restrict applications that can be installed on our official mobile devices. This consultation included whether MOD permits the use of the TikTok application in any circumstances.

## ■ RAF Lossiemouth

**John Healey:**

[\[170530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Lossiemouth.

**John Healey:**

[\[170532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of Kirknewton airfield.

**John Healey:**

[\[170534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Boulmer.

**John Healey:**

[\[170536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Spadeadam.

**John Healey:**

[\[170538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Woodvale.

**John Healey:**

[\[170540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Fylingdales.

**John Healey:**

[\[170542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Leeming.

**John Healey:**

[\[170544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) size in hectares and (b) housing unit potential is of RAF Menwith Hill.

**Alex Chalk:**

RAF Lossiemouth is 548.886 hectares in size.

Kirknewton Airfield is 94.878 hectares in size.

RAF Boulmer is 60.384 hectares in size.

RAF Spadeadam is 3607.295 hectares in size.

RAF Woodvale is 138.729 hectares in size.

RAF Fylingdales is 806.833 hectares in size.

RAF Leeming is 533.847 hectares in size.

RAF Menwith Hill is 220.289 hectares in size.

No assessment has been made of the Housing Unit Potential of these sites, as they have not been identified for disposal.

## ■ Russia: Ukraine

**John Healey:**

[\[152174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there is any evidence of Russian launching missile strikes against Ukraine from Belarusian territory.

**James Heappey:**

Since its all-out invasion of Ukraine, we assess that Russia has occasionally launched missiles against Ukraine from Belarussian territory, including SS-26 Iskander short-range ballistic missiles, and air defence missiles employed in the surface-to-surface role. In addition, it has highly likely also launched some Iranian provided one-way-attack uncrewed aerial vehicles (OWA-UAVs) from Belarus.

## ■ Shipbuilding

**David Warburton:**

[\[172473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support British shipbuilding.

**Alex Chalk:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave on 14 December 2022 to Question 104345 and 13 March 2023 to Question 159089 to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Kieran Mullan).

### **Attachments:**

1. Shipbuilding [104345 - Shipbuilding.docx]
2. Shipbuilding [159089 - Shipbuilding.docx]

## ■ Ukraine: Armed Conflict

**David Warburton:**

[\[172470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Ukrainian defence against Russian aggression.

**James Heappey:**

Ukraine continues to conduct a highly effective defence against Russia's invasion. On the ground, it holds Russian forces along a 1,200km front. In the air, it has effectively neutralised Russia's theoretically overwhelming advantage in air power through the skilled use of ground-based air defences. At sea, Ukraine's limited naval forces have had remarkable success to preventing Russia's Black Sea Fleet from conducting its sea control mission in key parts of the Black Sea. Ukraine has recaptured approximately half of the extra territory Russia seized after 24 February 2022.

Ukraine experiences pressures on its own military resources, but it has inflicted huge losses on Russia. The Russian military has suffered up to 200,000 casualties, and nearly 10,000 of its military vehicles have been verified as lost.

**EDUCATION****■ Adoption and Foster Care****Simon Lightwood:****[172550]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government takes to help ensure that families are kept together throughout the fostering and adoption process.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Before the decision is made to remove a child, local authorities, where possible, offer early help and support in order to keep the families together. In 'Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love', the government has outlined plans to build on the strengths of current early help services, through the creation of Family Help. The aim is to provide effective, joined up support to help families overcome multiple and complex problems before they escalate. Further details are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childrens-social-care-stable-homes-built-on-love>.

The department recognises the value of family arrangements, including Kinship Care. We have made a commitment to implement or explore each of the recommendations on Kinship Care from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, including a commitment to invest £9 million to establish a new kinship carer training offer in this Spending Review period and over £45 million to begin implementing family network support packages through the Families First for Children pathfinder. As part of this, the department will also invest in pilots that solely focus on Family Network Support Packages, in seven local areas. These pilots will allow us to test and evaluate the impact of these packages on keeping families together and keeping children out of care, and build on the investment we have already made to establish a network of up to 100 peer support groups for kinship carers across England.

When it is not possible for a child to live with their parent, a person with parental responsibility, or someone named in a child arrangements order, section 22C of the Children Act 1989 states that the local authority must:



- Give preference to a placement with an individual who is a relative, friend or other person connected with the child.
- Be satisfied that placement with foster carers is, in their opinion the most appropriate placement available.
- Ensure as far as reasonably practicable that the placement allows the child to live near their home and does not disrupt their education.

The Children Act 1989 makes clear that when determining the most appropriate placement for a looked after child who has a sibling, the local authority must also, as far as reasonably practicable, ensure the placement is such that the child can live with their sibling if that sibling is also looked after.

Where a child is placed in foster care, the local authority has a duty to promote contact between the child and their friends, relatives and others connected to the child or with parental responsibility, unless this is not reasonably practical or consistent with the child's welfare. Details for promoting and maintaining contact must be included in the child's care plan.

Where the court decides the best decision for the child is adoption, it is important that siblings are placed together. The adoption statutory guidance says that siblings should be adopted by the same prospective adopter, unless there is good reason why they should not be. Where an agency is making a placement decision on two or more children from the same family, it should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the quality of the children's relationship, their individual needs and the likely capacity of the prospective adopter to meet the needs of all the siblings being placed together. Where it is not possible for the siblings to be placed together, the agency should carefully consider the need for the children to remain in contact with each other and the need for adoption support.

Where safe and appropriate, maintaining relationships with birth family members is important to wellbeing of the child. The government committed to improving contact practice in the National Adoption Strategy. Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) leaders are trialling what good contact practice looks like, with a view to setting national standards in this area. RAAs are also currently trialling a programme called 'Letterswap,' a new digital platform to improve the current 'Letterbox' system.

## ■ Care Homes and Foster Care: Inspections

**Esther McVey:**

**[169269]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many in-person inspections were carried out by Ofsted in (a) children's and (b) foster homes in each of the last five years.

**Claire Coutinho:**

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

The data requested is not held centrally by the department. Ofsted is able to provide data on the number of in person inspections in each of the last five years.

It should be noted that individual foster homes are not inspected by Ofsted, however Ofsted is required to undertake in person inspections of independent fostering agencies and local authority fostering services through the framework for inspection of local authority children's services.

## ■ Care Leavers

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[168087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 4.152 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, if she will list the local authorities that will receive funding through the Staying Close programme by March 2025; and how much funding she expects each local authority to receive.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The third round of applications for Staying Close funding closed on the 22 February 2023. The department will publish details of the awarded local authorities in due course, along with the amounts they will receive once all required evaluation and clearance processes have been completed. Details of how the additional funding announced on 15 March 2023 will be allocated will also be shared shortly.

## ■ Childcare

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[165329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the availability of childcare; and what steps she taking to ensure there is an adequate supply of skills to address personnel shortages in that sector.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Ofsted data shows that the number of places offered by providers on the Early Years Register has remained broadly stable at 1.3 million places since August 2015. Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area. The department has regular contact with each local authority in England about their sufficiency of childcare and any issues they are facing.

The department continues to explore how to best support the early years sector to recruit and retain the staff it needs. We will work closely with the sector to develop plans to grow and support the workforce. The department will share further information in due course.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[165330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to help ensure that childcare is not more expensive for parents who are night workers.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[165331]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to create a strategy outlining how her Department plans to ensure that all parents who require childcare are able to access those facilities.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The Spring Budget 2023 announced the largest ever investment in childcare in England. The measures that were announced will be transformative for parents, children and the economy.

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

We are 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.

The government will also increase support for those parents on Universal Credit who face the highest childcare costs, often because they are working longer hours, by increasing the Universal Credit childcare cost maximum amount and providing support with childcare costs upfront rather than arrears.

By 2027/28, government funding on free hours and early education will be in excess of £8 billion a year. This will help working families with their childcare costs, meaning thousands of parents, including night workers, will benefit from government funded support.

The department 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 also launching a new national wraparound childcare pilot scheme. We will provide a total of £289 million in start-up funding to enable schools and local areas to test flexible ways of providing childcare.

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

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[166276]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to help increase the number of childcare providers.

**Claire Coutinho:**

In the 2023 Spring Budget, my right hon Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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 every year on free hours and early education, helping working families with

their childcare costs. This represents the largest ever investment in childcare in England.

Our reforms include:

- Providing over £4.1 billion by 2027/28 to fund 30 hours of free childcare for children over the age of nine months.
- Investing £204 million from September 2023, rising to £288 million in 2024/25 to uplift the rates for existing entitlements.
- Increasing the supply of wraparound care through £289 million start up funding.
- Attracting more people to childminding through an up to £7.2 million start up grant fund.
- Giving providers more flexibility by changing staff:child ratios to 1:5 for two-year-olds in England.
- Launching a consultation on further measures to support reform of the childcare market and further flexibilities for providers.

The department will continue to work closely with the sector on the implementation of these reforms to identify what needs to be in place to support this significant expansion in childcare provision and will set out further details in due course.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[166373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to paragraph 3.49 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC 1183, what estimate she has made of her Department's planned expenditure in 2023-24 on the (a) universal 15 hours free childcare entitlement for all three and four year olds, (b) additional 15 hours free childcare entitlement for eligible working parents of three and four year olds and (c) 15 hours free childcare offer for disadvantaged children aged two.

**Munira Wilson:**

[\[166374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Financial Statement on 15 March 2023 that the additional funding for childcare providers is an average of a 30 per cent increase in the two-year-old rate this year, if she will publish the average hourly rate to be paid to childcare providers for each free childcare hour they provide to a child aged (a) two, and (b) three or four, in (i) 2022-23, (ii) 2023-24, (iii) 2024-25.

**Claire Coutinho:**

On 15 March 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced that the hourly rates for the entitlements will be substantially uplifted, on top of the investments announced at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 and on 16 December 2022.

On 16 December, the department announced indicative funding allocations in 2023/24 for local authorities for the 2, 3, and 4-year-old entitlements, totalling £3.927 billion. We will now provide £204 million of additional funding from September 2023,

increasing to £288 million by 2024/5, for local authorities to further increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, with further uplifts to follow each year. This will include an average of 30% increase in the 2-year-old rate from September 2023 and mean that in 2024, the average hourly rate for 2-year-olds will be more than £8 per hour, and around £11 per hour for under 2s. The average 3- and 4-year-old rate will rise in line with inflation to over £5.50 per hour from September 2023, with further uplifts beyond this.

This funding is in addition to the £4.1 billion that the government will provide by 2027/28 to facilitate the expansion of the new free hours offer, under which all eligible working parents in England will, by September 2025, be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

The department will provide further details of the distribution of the uplifted funding to local authorities for 2023/24 and for 2024/25, including average hourly rates for the 2, 3 and 4-year-old entitlements, which are demand-led, in due course.

Average hourly rates for the 2023/24 financial year, not including the abovementioned uplifts, were published on 16 December 2022, and are reproduced in the table below, which also includes average hourly rates for 2022/23.

ENTITLEMENT:	2022 TO 2023 (£)	2023 TO 2024 (£)
3 and 4-year-old Universal Hours entitlement, average hourly funding rate	£5.06	£5.31
3 and 4-year-old Additional Hours entitlement, average hourly funding rate	£4.98	£5.23
3 and 4-year-old entitlements, combined average hourly funding rate	£5.04	£5.29
2-year-old entitlement, average hourly funding rate	£5.77	£6.00

Notes on the averages:

1. 1 Part Time Equivalent (PTE) is equivalent to 15 hours of childcare.
2. National average hourly funding rates are subject to change when allocations are updated to make use of Jan 2023 PTEs and Jan 2024 PTEs, i.e., if these have different PTE distributions between local authorities.
3. For 2022-23, the 3- and 4-year-old entitlement average funding rate is made up from a Universal Hours average of £5.06 and an Additional Hours average of £4.98. Both these entitlements are funded on the same EYNFF funding rates at LA-level,

but they have different PTE distributions between LAs, e.g., Universal Hours has a higher proportion of total PTEs in London LAs, which leads to different national averages. These figures are based on initial allocations.

4. For 2023-24, the 3- and 4-year-old entitlement average funding rate is made up from a Universal Hours average of £5.31 and an Additional Hours average of £5.23. Both these entitlements are funded on the same EYNFF funding rates at LA-level, but they have different PTE distributions between LAs, e.g., Universal Hours has a higher proportion of total PTEs in London LAs, which leads to different national averages. These figures are based on indicative allocations.
5. The 3- and 4-year-old average figures for 2022-23 do not include funding for the Teachers Pay Grant and Teachers Pension Employer Contributions (TPPG), which from 2023-24 has been included in the hourly rate.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[168083]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of children that will take up the additional free hours of childcare announced in the Spring Budget 2023 in 2025-26, broken down by age.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[168084]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of children that will take up the additional free hours of childcare announced in the Spring Budget 2023 in 2026-27, broken down by age.

**Claire Coutinho:**

In the 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced a number of 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 announcement represents the largest ever investment in childcare in England.

In future, working parents will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare a week, for 38 weeks a year, from the point their child is 9 months to when their child starts school. This offer will be rolled out in full from September 2025. The department is ensuring a phased implementation of the expansion to the 30 hours offer to allow the market to develop the necessary capacity, and we will work closely with the sector to develop plans to grow, develop and support the workforce.

Eligibility estimates for the free early education entitlements are explained in the methodology of the 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' under 'Data Quality'. This can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/methodology/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-methodology>.

Further details will be provided in due course.

## ■ Childcare: Fees and Charges

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

**[160213]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the eligibility rules for 30 hours of free childcare so that children become eligible in the month following their third birthday.

**Claire Coutinho:**

Eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds are currently eligible for 30 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks a year. In the 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced a number of transformative reforms to childcare. This includes the expansion of the free childcare offer so that eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks, per year from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

The department expects to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education by 2027/28, helping working families with their childcare costs. This announcement represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England.

From April 2024, all eligible working parents of 2-year-olds will become eligible for 15 hours of free childcare, with eligible parents of 9 months to 2-year-olds eligible for 15 hours from September 2024 onwards. The offer will be rolled out in full, with eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years able to access 30 hours, from September 2025.

To be eligible for this offer, parents will need to earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at National Minimum or Living Wage, and less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year.

As set out in the regulations underpinning the entitlements, eligibility for the current free early education entitlements, including 30 hours free childcare, begins from 1 September, 1 January or 1 April following the child's third birthday, or their second birthday if they are eligible for the 15 hours for disadvantaged 2-year-olds. Parents must apply for 30 hours free childcare in the term their child turns 3 if they wish to take up a place from the start of the following term. Further information on the recommended dates at which parents should apply is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/30-hours-free-childcare?step-by-step-nav=f517cd57-3c18-4bb9-aa8b-1b907e279bf9>.

These termly deadlines ensure that children can receive at least two years of early education and/or reception before they reach compulsory school age, which is the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. They also allow local authorities and childcare providers to better plan and ensure that sufficient early years places are available for parents each term, as there are clear periods for when children are likely to start a place.

In the meantime, parents can also access other childcare offers such as Tax-Free Childcare and Universal Credit. Tax-Free Childcare can help parents with childcare



for children aged from 0-11, and for disabled children until the age of 17. Universal Credit Childcare provides support with childcare costs for children aged 0-16. The government is taking action to support parents in receipt of this with childcare costs upfront when they need it, rather than in arrears.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[165327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the cost of childcare on parents who do not receive Universal Credit or legacy benefits; and what steps she plans to take to help reduce the cost of childcare for working parents.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[165479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a Government universal offer on childcare.

**Claire Coutinho:**

In the 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced a number of transformative reforms to childcare. This includes the expansion of the 30 hours free childcare offer, through which eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks, per year from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

The government will expect to be spending in excess of £8 billion every year on free hours and early education by 2027/28, helping working families with their childcare costs. This announcement represents the single biggest investment in childcare in England.

The department understands that parents value high-quality, affordable childcare and recognises that cost of living pressures are affecting families across the country. The key objective of this announcement is to support parents to return and stay in work. This is why this offer is conditional on work and is not a universal offer.

Eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds are currently eligible for 30 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks a year. From April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks a year. From September 2024, this will be extended to parents of 9 month to 3-year-olds, and from September 2025, working parents of 9 month to 3-year-olds will be able to access 30 free hours per week, over 38 weeks a year. To be eligible for this offer, as with the current 30 hours offer, parents will need to earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at National Minimum or Living Wage and less than £100,000 adjusted net income per year.

The reforms announced build on our current early education entitlements that the government offers, which includes a universal 15 hour offer for all 3 and 4-year-old children. All children can access this entitlement for 38 weeks of the year from the term after they turn three until they start school, regardless of family circumstances.

Parents of disadvantaged 2-year-olds will continue to be eligible for the 15 hours free early education. This includes working parents on low incomes and in receipt of



certain benefits, those with education, health and care plans, and looked-after children.

Tax-Free Childcare is also available for working parents of children aged 0-11, or up to 17 for eligible children with disabilities. This can save parents up to £2,000 per year, or up to £4,000 for eligible children with disabilities.

## ■ **Childcare: Finance**

**Kim Leadbeater:**

[\[160461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure childcare remains affordable despite the rising cost of living.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department recognises that families and early years providers across the country are facing financial pressures. This is why we have spent more than £20 billion over the past five years to support families with the cost of childcare. We are currently looking into options to improve the cost, flexibility, and availability of childcare.

In July 2022, the department announced measures to increase take-up of childcare support to ensure that families can access government support on their childcare bills. This included our Childcare Choices communications campaign to ensure every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for. The launch of this campaign has had a positive impact, leading to an increase in referrals for Universal Credit, Tax-Free Childcare, and 30 hours entitlements.

In the 2023 Spring Budget, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the department will provide over £4.1 billion by 2027/28 to fund 30 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks per year, for working parents with children aged nine months to three years in England.

From April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds can access 15 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks a year. From September 2024, this will be extended to parents of nine month to three-year-olds, and from September 2025, working parents of nine month to three-year-olds will be able to access 30 free hours per week, over 38 weeks a year.

The department also announced that 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.

We are 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: Standards**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[166273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact on the quality of childcare of a greater child to carer ratio.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The government remains committed to supporting the childcare sector and providing flexibility to providers, to help more working parents access childcare. On 15 March 2023 the government announced a significant new investment in childcare, worth over £4.1 billion by 2027/28. The government also announced changes to staff:child ratios for 2 year olds from 1:4 to 1:5.

The department trusts that childcare providers know their children and their staff best. We fully support practitioners to make the correct decision on ratios, ensuring they meet the individual needs of their staff and children. The proposed changes to ratios would continue to be a statutory minimum requirement for settings, but providers can continue to work to tighter ratios if they decide that is best for the children and staff at their setting. A full response to the consultation can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1142987/Childcare\\_regulatory\\_changes\\_government\\_consultation\\_response.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1142987/Childcare_regulatory_changes_government_consultation_response.pdf).

Alongside the consultation, the department ran a survey of early years providers to establish the likely impact of the changes on the quality of provision. This survey has been published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1143005/Findings\\_from\\_the\\_early\\_years\\_staff-child\\_ratio\\_consultation\\_survey.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1143005/Findings_from_the_early_years_staff-child_ratio_consultation_survey.pdf).

To support staff and leadership, the department launched a new National Professional Qualification for Early Years Leadership in 2021. This provides training and support for early years practitioners to develop expertise in leading high-quality education and care, as well as effective staff and organisational management.

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well. As of March 2022, 96% of all childcare providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register were judged either good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. The department will continue to work with Ofsted to monitor this.

**■ Denton Community College****Andrew Gwynne:****[172360]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's estimated timescale is for seeking improvements at Denton Community College following Ofsted's inadequate finding of that college and the decision to make an academy order.

**Andrew Gwynne:****[172361]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will meet the Rt hon. Member for Denton and Reddish to discuss Denton Community College.

**Nick Gibb:**

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has a statutory duty to make an academy order in respect of any maintained school judged as Inadequate by Ofsted, to enable it to become an academy and receive additional support from a sponsor.

The academy order was issued to the governing body of Denton Community College and Tameside Local Authority on 22 March 2023. The Regional Director for the North West, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, will take responsibility for ensuring that Denton Community College becomes a sponsored academy as swiftly as possible, including identifying the most suitable academy trust and brokering the new relationship between that academy trust and the school.

In accordance with the academy order made under Section 4(A1) or (1)(b) of the Academies Act 2010, the governing body and the Local Authority will be under a duty to facilitate Denton Community College's conversion into an academy by taking all reasonable steps towards that end. During the interim period before the school re-opens as an academy, the Local Authority retains the responsibility for the school's performance, including provision for school improvement.

Once the Regional Director has identified the academy trust for Denton Community College, the academy trust has a duty to communicate information to parents regarding their plans for improving that school, before it is converted into an academy.

The Regional Director's office has been asked to contact the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish to meet and discuss this matter.

**■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Speech and Language Therapy****Rachael Maskell:**[\[168065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children with Special educational needs and disabilities receive Speech and Language Therapy support.

**Rachael Maskell:**[\[168066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive (a) Physiotherapy and (b) Occupational Therapy.

**Claire Coutinho:**

To ensure children and young people receive the support they need to thrive in education, the department is developing new national special educational needs and disabilities and alternative provision standards. These will cover early years, school, and post-16 provision. They will set out what support should be available and who is responsible for providing it, to give families confidence and clarity on how the needs of children and young people will be met.

To improve access to speech and language therapy, we are funding the Early Language and Support For Every Child (ELSEC) pathfinders in partnership with NHS England. This will fund nine Integrated Care Boards and will fund one of the local areas within each of the nine Regional Expert Partnerships to trial new ways of working to better identify and support children with speech language and communication needs in early years and primary schools.

To support the supply of more speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists to the NHS, since September 2020 all eligible undergraduate and postgraduate degree students have been able to apply for a non-repayable training grant of a minimum of £5,000 per academic year, with further financial support available for childcare, accommodation, and travel costs.

## ■ Education: LGBTQ+ People

**Nick Fletcher:** [\[169475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether educational materials produced by the campaign group Educate and Celebrate are approved for use in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

Schools are responsible for teaching relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), in line with the statutory guidance. This can be found here:

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

The Department does not endorse or promote resources to schools, including those produced by Educate and Celebrate.

The Department is very concerned by reports that inappropriate materials are being used to teach relationships and sex education and has brought forward the review of the RSHE statutory guidance as a result, including conducting a public consultation as soon as possible. The review will enable us to decide whether further action is needed to ensure that schools are fully transparent with their RSHE policies and what will be taught.

Schools must make sure all content they use is factual and age appropriate and should engage with parents, so they are aware of what their children are being taught. Schools should be engaging with parents proactively on how and what they are teaching children on these issues.

The Department is clear that parents have a right to view teaching materials and copyright law does not prevent a parent from viewing external resources.

## ■ Extended Services

**Helen Hayes:** [\[168085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish further details on the wraparound pathfinder scheme to support the expansion of school-based childcare provision either side of the school day.

**Helen Hayes:**

**[168086]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number of (a) schools and (b) local authorities that will take part in the wraparound pathfinder scheme to support the expansion of school-based childcare provision either side of the school day in (a) 2024-25 and (b) 2025-26.

**Claire Coutinho:**

To improve the availability of wraparound childcare, the government has announced an investment of £289 million in a national pathfinder scheme in England to support local authorities to work with primary schools to set up and deliver wraparound childcare before and after school.

Schools and local areas will be able to access the funding from September 2024 across two academic years, with some trailblazer local authorities rolling out the programme earlier. The funding period will run until April 2026, by which point the department expects most primary schools will be able to deliver their own before and after school provision that is self-financing, and sustainable in the longer term.

The department is working with schools, private providers, and local authorities to ensure that this programme is designed to meet the needs of parents, and we will provide further information about the pathfinder scheme as it becomes available.

## ■ Further Education and Sixth Form Education

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[172381]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many 16 to 19 year olds withdrew from their (a) sixth form and (b) further education courses in academic years (i) 2020-21, (ii) 2021-22 and (iii) 2022-23 to date.

**Robert Halfon:**

The department has published retention data for students at the end of 16-18 study by institution type. The latest data available is for the 2020/21 academic year, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results/2020-21>. The retention rate is the proportion of students who are retained to the end of the 'core aim' (or main learning aim) of their study programme at a school or college.

Retention data for 2021/22 will be published on 30 March 2023 in the next update and will be available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2022-revised--2>.

Since 2010, the department has put in place a range of policies that have significantly reduced the quantity of young people designated as 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). The proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds NEET in 2022 was 12.3%, which is down 3.2 percentage points since 2010. This information can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief/2022>.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Bill Esterson:**[\[172387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to respond to correspondence of 20 March 2023 from the hon. Member for Sefton Central on the repair of school buildings in Sefton Central constituency.

**Nick Gibb:**

A response to the hon. Member for Sefton Central's correspondence will be sent shortly.

**■ Pre-school Education: Government Assistance****Stephen Morgan:**[\[162276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to support Early Years providers in order to (a) reduce provider closures and (b) maintain or increase the number of available childcare places.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department recognises that families and early years providers across the country are facing financial pressures. This is why we have spent more than £20 billion over the past five years to support families with the cost of childcare.

In the 2023 Spring Budget, my right hon Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer 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.

This includes £204 million this year, increasing to £288 million in 2024/25, for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, and then increasing year on year to meet rising cost pressures.

This will include an average of 30% increase in the national average 2 year old rate from September 2023 to around £8.

The department also announced that we will launch a consultation on further measures to support reform of the childcare market, to improve the childcare offer for parents. This will include exploring further flexibilities for providers, growing and supporting the workforce, allowing childminders more choice over how they operate and introducing a new, better tailored childminder-specific Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

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.

The government has announced a freeze to the business rates multiplier in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This will support all ratepayers, including early years businesses, and mean bills are 6% lower than without the freeze.

In the 2022 Spring Statement, the government increased the Employment Allowance from £4,000 to £5,000 to support smaller businesses by reducing their costs of employment. Businesses who had employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) bills of £100,000 or less in the previous tax year will be able to claim up to £5,000 off their employer NICs bills. This means that 40% of all businesses will be unaffected by changes to employer NICs.

The £18 billion Energy Bill Relief Scheme is supporting millions of businesses with rising energy costs, and the Chancellor has made clear this will continue until June 2023.

From April 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.

The key measure of sufficiency is whether the supply of available places is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents and children. Ofsted data currently shows that the number of places offered by providers on the Early Years Register has remained broadly stable since August 2015.

Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that the provision of childcare is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area.

The department has regular contact with each local authority in England regarding sufficiency of childcare and any issues local authorities are facing.

## ■ **Special Educational Need: Extracurricular Activities**

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[168068]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that children and young people with SEND are to participate in out of school activities.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The department recognises the benefits that participating in out-of-school activities can have for children's wellbeing, education, and social development, including for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

The department has published guidance on wraparound and holiday childcare which makes clear that schools should ensure that wraparound or holiday childcare providers consider the needs of children with SEND when planning their activities to prevent discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster positive relations. This guidance is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/778997/Rights\\_to\\_request\\_guidance-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/778997/Rights_to_request_guidance-2019.pdf).



All parents have the right to request that the school their child attends provides wraparound childcare, and schools should not refuse such a request without a reasonable justification.

To further support children to attend out-of-school activities safely, the department has published guidance for out-of-school providers on keeping children safe in out-of-school settings, which includes advice on the safeguarding arrangements they should put in place for children and young people with SEND, and published accompanying guidance for parents to support them to choose a safe setting for their child.

Guidance on keeping children safe in out of school settings can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice>. The guidance for parents can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-safeguarding-children-in-out-of-school-settings>.

Short breaks are a key part of a range of provision that supports disabled children and their families and are highly valued by these families as an essential part of helping them to lead ordinary lives. In 2022, we launched the Short Breaks Innovation Fund, a three-year £30 million fund to test novel approaches to integrated delivery of short breaks and support services for children and young people (CYP) with SEND. We have funded seven areas in year one of the programme and expect to announce the successful areas for year two shortly.

## ■ Special Educational Needs

**Daisy Cooper:**

[169465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on (a) the number of requests for new needs assessments for education, health and care plans from upper-tier local authorities and (b) the number of such requests that have been open for more than 20 weeks.

**Claire Coutinho:**

The requested information is available in the National Statistics publication on education, health and care (EHC) plans, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>.

The latest available data shows that 93,300 initial requests were made for an assessment for an EHC plan during 2021. Of requests which led to a new EHC plan made during 2021, 34,249 (59.9%) were issued within 20 weeks.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Hydrotherapy

**Rachael Maskell:**

[168067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the availability and access to hydrotherapy on provision for children with SEND.



**Claire Coutinho:**

The department does not collect data on the availability of hydrotherapy. Local authorities are statutorily required to keep the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities under review, including its sufficiency. Local authorities work with parents, young people, and providers to achieve this. Keeping this provision under review would include the availability of specialist facilities such as hydrotherapy provision.

**■ Students: Loans****Darren Jones:**[\[170682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason repayment holidays are not permitted on student loans.

**Robert Halfon:**

The repayment of student loans is governed by the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (as amended).

Student loans have more favourable terms than commercial loans and carry significant protections for those making loan repayments, including for lower earners and borrowers who experience a reduction in their income. Borrowers are only liable to repay after leaving study when earning over the relevant repayment threshold. At any time, if a borrower's income falls below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, their repayments stop. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of protection. If, at the end of the year, the borrower's total income is below the relevant annual threshold, they may reclaim any repayments from the Student Loans Company made during that year.

Repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold. This is currently £27,295 for a post-2012 undergraduate loan and £21,000 for a postgraduate loan. These do not change as a result of the interest rate charged, or the amount borrowed.

Due to the unique nature of student loans, they are exempt from the Consumer Credit Directive and are not subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority. Student loans, along with other specific debts, are non-qualifying debts and are therefore exempt from the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) which scheme in any event provides for a moratorium not a payment holiday. Student loans are non-provable debts in bankruptcy since 2004, and therefore repayments must continue to be made by the student.

Maximum tuition fees, and the subsidised loans available from the government to pay them, remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year in respect of standard full-time courses. We are also freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. The department believes that a continued fee freeze achieves the best balance

between ensuring that the system remains financially sustainable, offering good value for the taxpayer, and reducing debt levels for students in real terms.

## ■ Training

**Jim Shannon:**

**[169294]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking with her Cabinet colleagues to ensure that people in all regions wishing to enter new careers have access to adequate training; and if she will make it her policy to ensure such training is provided free of charge.

**Robert Halfon:**

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

The department is investing £3.8 billion more in further education and skills over the Parliamentary session. The department's skills reforms provide a ladder of opportunity that enables young people and adults to attain good jobs and progress in their careers.

Apprenticeships offer individuals throughout England the opportunity to gain valuable skills, retrain, or reskill for careers in a variety of industries. Apprentices earn a wage while they learn and are not responsible for their apprenticeship training costs.

In the Spring Budget announced on 15 March 2023, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a new initiative called Returnerships. This programme is designed to combine the three different pathways of Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and Sector-Based Work Academies Programmes, in order to make it easier for people to return to work. Returnerships will raise awareness of these pathways, providing a clear route back into work and encouraging employers to hire older workers.

The department is also investing in re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities, to make sure that adults of any age, can upskill to reach their potential, transforming lives and delivering on the National Skills Fund commitment. As part of this investment, we have introduced the Free Courses for Jobs scheme, which gives eligible adults in England without an existing full Level 3 qualification or who are unemployed or meet the low wage criteria, the chance to access over 400 Level 3 qualifications for free.

This offer has seen over 35,000 enrolments reported between April 2021 and October 2022. This means that enrolments are 82% higher for adults without a full Level 3 qualification, compared to uptake of the same qualifications in 2018/19.

Skills Bootcamps were introduced at the end of 2020 to deliver short, free, flexible training courses, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills, with an offer of a job interview with an employer on completion.

Skills Bootcamps are still a relatively new training offer, but they are already delivering positive outcomes for adult learners and employers and are available right across the country. Following the recent Budget announcement, the department aims

to make 64,000 training places a year available by the 2024/25 financial year to ensure that even more learners across all areas of the country can access Skills Bootcamps.

We are continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB), which was £1.34 billion in the 2022/23 academic year. The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to help them gain the skills they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). Devolution of the AEB gives MCAs and the GLA direct control over adult education provision for their residents and provides local areas the opportunity to meet local needs.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas where colleges, local authorities and other providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB funding, to best meet the needs of their communities.

The National Careers Service provides free, up to date, impartial information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the Labour Market in England and offers intensive support for low skilled adults without a qualification at level 3, as one of our six priority groups for the Service.

## ■ Young People: Unemployment

**Mr Toby Perkins:**

**[172382]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

**Robert Halfon:**

Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and support young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET). All 16 and 17-year-olds are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the September Guarantee, regardless of qualifications gained.

Since 2010, the department has put in place a range of policies that have significantly reduced the quantity of young people designated as 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). The proportion of 16 to 24-year-olds NEET in 2022 was 12.3%, which is down 3.2 percentage points since 2010. This information can be found at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/neet-statistics-annual-brief/2022>.

A range of provision is available for young people aged 16-24 to equip them with the skills and experience they need to progress. This includes joined-up support to young people to help minimise time spent NEET, such as Youth Hubs and Supported

Internships, which offer tailored support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The department's 'Get the Jump' campaign is targeting young people aged 14 to 19 to ensure they are aware of all the education and training choices available to them, how they compare and where they can lead.

We are prioritising the rollout of Careers Hubs. Evidence shows that schools and colleges which are part of a Hub achieve almost double the amount of Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance than those not part of a Hub. This is important because each additional benchmark achieved by a school is typically associated with a 1.4% decline in NEET rates, amounting to a 9.7% decline if a school achieves all eight benchmarks compared to achieving no benchmarks, either fully or partially.

In addition to this, the National Careers Service (NCS) offers intensive support for the most disadvantaged cohorts of the working-age population, including NEET 18 to 24-year-olds. They can access impartial, local careers advice via the NCS, either face-to-face or via the telephone helpline, webchat or website.

The department is also taking steps to increase the number and quality of apprenticeships which will create further opportunities for young people. The new 'Career Starter Apprenticeships' campaign is raising awareness of apprenticeships which offer great opportunities for those looking for their first role after leaving full-time education, and we are working with the Department for Work and Pensions to share and promote this information through Job Centre Plus.

The department provides a range of financial support for students who need it to enable them to participate in post-16 education, including free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education, such as travel, books, equipment, and trips, and support for childcare and residential costs where required. We allocated over £152 million in the 2022/23 academic year to institutions to help disadvantaged 16 to 19-year-olds with costs such as travel, with a further £31.7 million allocated for free further education meals.

## ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

### ■ Alternative Fuel Payments

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

**[172356]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, if he will publish the modelling used to select households that receive payments under the Alternative Fuel Payment scheme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

Details on how the Department determined which households received an automatic Alternative Fuel Payment can be found in Section 3 of the Domestic Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) scheme in Great Britain: guidance for electricity suppliers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-alternative-fuel-payment-afp-scheme-in-great-britain-guidance-for-electricity-suppliers>.

This includes links to relevant data, where available.

**Angela Crawley:**

**[172449]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many households have received support through the Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Alternative Fund for the Alternative Fuel Payment, the element which requires an application, launched recently on 6 March and early data is still being collected. Electricity suppliers, who deliver the automatic enrolment element of the scheme, recently provided MPAN-level delivery data to the Government. Transparency data will be published in due course.

## ■ Coal

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[169242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public of the (a) procurement and (b) resale of coal bought for emergency use in power stations during winter 2022-23.

**Graham Stuart:**

National Grid: Electricity System Operator (ESO) have Winter Contingency Contracts with three coal operators. Their current forecast for the total cost over of the contracts for winter 22/23 to 31 March 2023 is £308m, including the cost of the coal and operational costs. This will continue to be refined over the contracted period. To reduce the overall costs to consumers, any unused coal will be sold back to the market when the contracts expire. The final value that is recovered from the sale of the coal will be published by ESO.

## ■ Consumers: Protection

**James Wild:**

**[169470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to paragraph 5.2 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP751, published on 17 November 2022, what recent progress his Department has made on developing a new approach to consumer protection after April 2024.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry on a new approach to consumer protection in energy markets. Officials are proactively reaching out to stakeholders, to discuss their views on the issue. The Government will set out its position when this assessment is complete, in time to deliver a new approach from April 2024.

**■ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Hays****Justin Madders:** [\[172429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2023 to Question 155157 on Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Minimum Wage, what the total value was of those contracts let with Hays Specialist Recruitment Limited.

**Graham Stuart:**

The total value of the contracts let with Hays Specialist Recruitment Limited, as referred to in the answer I gave the Hon. Member on 8 March 2023 to Question 155157, is £242,226.

**■ Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Tenants****Fleur Anderson:** [\[172518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2022 to Question 46172 on Energy: Tenants, whether his Department is introducing regulations to require heat networks to pass on the benefit of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme to end consumers.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme regulations require heat networks to pass through the discount to end consumers in a just and reasonable manner.

**■ Energy: Conservation****Julian Knight:** [\[169320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to help increase household energy efficiency through (a) insulation and (b) boiler upgrades.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government is investing £6.6 billion over this Parliament on clean heat and improving energy efficiency in buildings, including through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Home Upgrade Grant, and Boiler Upgrade Scheme. In addition, £6 billion of new Government funding will be made available from 2025 to 2028.

The £1 billion ECO+ scheme will be launched from Spring 2023 targeting a broader pool of households in the least efficient homes in lower council tax bands as well as the most vulnerable.

A digital advice service 'find energy improvements suitable for your home' on GOV.UK launched in July 2022 to provide improved information to help households identify suitable energy saving measures.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[169430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how much and what proportion of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's capital departmental expenditure will be allocated to energy efficiency measures.

**Graham Stuart:**

At the 2023 Budget, HM Treasury published indicative Capital Department Expenditure Limit budgets for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which will be confirmed at Main Estimates 2023-24. These indicative budgets are £5.9 billion in 2023-24 and £8.2 billion in 2024-25.

The Department's current plans include investments of over £1.3 billion in 2023-24 and £1.5 billion in 2024-25 into measures supporting energy efficiency, including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

## ■ **Energy: Government Assistance**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[172323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what additional support with fuel payments is available for people with Parkinson's Disease; and if he will make a statement.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach to consumer protection from April 2024.

At present there is no specific support for people with Parkinson's. In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bills Support Scheme, for 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living payments. A payment of £150 will be made available to individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits.

## ■ **Energy: Pensioners**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[169296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he plans to take steps to provide further support with energy costs to pensioners who are in receipt of pension credits and who may be unable to afford fuel bills.

**Amanda Solloway:**

More than eight million pensioner households across the UK will receive an additional £300 Cost of Living Payment during winter 2023-24 on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment.

The Autumn Statement set out a commitment to work with consumer groups and industry to develop a new approach to consumer protection in the energy markets. Officials are proactively reaching out to and discussing the approach with



stakeholders. The Government will set out its position when this assessment is complete, in time to deliver a new approach from April 2024.

### ■ Housing: Insulation

**Ruth Jones:** [\[169431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the impact of Government policy on home insulation and retrofitting on (a) the UK's net zero target and (b) levels of fuel poverty.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government is firmly committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and to upgrading as many homes as possible to achieve EPC band C by 2035 where cost-effective, practical and affordable. By 2021, 47% of homes in England had reached EPC C, up from 14% in 2010.

In England, our statutory fuel poverty target is to ensure that as many fuel poor households as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of a Band C by 2030. In 2022, an estimated 52.8 per cent of all low-income households were living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating (FPEER) of band C or better.

### ■ Housing: Solar Power

**Matt Western:** [\[169384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the total number of households that have benefitted from the Solar Together programme up to 20 March 2023.

**Matt Western:** [\[169385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the number of applicants who have withdrawn from the Solar Together programme.

**Matt Western:** [\[169386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what estimate he has made of the average wait time from acceptance onto the Solar Together programme to installation.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government has not made an assessment on the Solar Together scheme, which has been adopted by a number of local authorities.

The Government welcomes more deployment of rooftop solar panels and is supportive of innovative solutions that deliver cost effective installations for consumers.



## ■ Hydrogen

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

**[172321]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of using the gas network to carry green hydrogen; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

National Grid and the Gas Distribution Networks are assessing the viability and potential costs of using the natural gas transmission and distribution networks to transport 100% hydrogen and early results from this work are promising.

The Government is also planning to take a strategic policy decision in 2023 on whether to seek to enable the blending of hydrogen in the existing gas distribution network. Further details will be provided this year including through the government response to the consultation on hydrogen transport and storage infrastructure, which the Government aims to publish in Q2 2023.

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

**[172322]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department is taking to encourage the conversion of excess energy into green hydrogen by electrolysis; and if he will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

Hydrogen could provide flexible low carbon generation capacity as the Government integrates more renewables into its energy system. At least half the Government's ambition for up to 10GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 will come from electrolytic hydrogen. The Government's first electrolytic hydrogen allocation round opened last year, with shortlisted projects announced shortly and contracts awarded later this year. The Government aims to run annual allocation rounds for electrolytic hydrogen, moving to price competitive allocation by 2025 subject to legislation and market conditions. This could enable up to 1GW of green hydrogen production in construction or operational by 2025.

## ■ Oil Rigs

**Kenny MacAskil:**

**[170746]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, how many (a) oil production and (b) exploration rigs are working in the North Sea and west of Shetland.

**Graham Stuart:**

There are currently 342 oil and gas production facilities in the North Sea and West of Shetland, of which 297 are fixed platforms. The exact locations of these can be found via the North Sea Transition Authority's offshore interactive map via:

[www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f4b1ea5802944a55aa4a9df0184205a5](http://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f4b1ea5802944a55aa4a9df0184205a5).

According to Westwood Energy RigLogix service, there are currently 31 mobile oil and gas drilling rigs located in the North Sea and West of Shetland. Of these, 19 are currently either on active operations or moving to location, seven are awaiting deployment, and five are in shipyards undergoing inspection, maintenance, or modification.

## ■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[169316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason it is his policy to (a) exclude recipients of non-means tested disability benefits and (b) include recipients of housing benefits in the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Government limited eligibility to means-tested benefits, including Housing Benefit, and tax credits below a certain income threshold as the most effective available proxies for low income and to maximise the targeting on fuel poverty. Our analysis based on the English Housing Survey was that the fuel poverty rates for DLA and PIP recipients in receipt of one of the qualifying means-tested benefits was 41%, compared to 14% for DLA and PIP recipients who are not eligible.

## ■ Warm Home Discount Scheme: Eligibility

**Beth Winter:**

[\[169463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156174 on Warm Home Discount Scheme, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of households that were previously eligible for the Warm Homes Discount and are no longer eligible.

**Beth Winter:**

[\[169464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2023 to Question 156174 on Warm Home Discount Scheme, whether his Department have asked household energy suppliers to provide an estimate of the number of households who were previously eligible for the Warm Homes Discount and are no longer eligible.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The evaluation of the reformed Warm Home Discount scheme is expected to commence in Summer 2023. We do not collect claimant data from previous years held by energy suppliers, and there are no current plans to compare previous and current recipients in the evaluation.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Air Quality Grant Scheme****James Daly:****[159097]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether (a) Greater Manchester Combined Authority or (b) any other councils within that Combined Authority (i) applied for and (ii) secured funding through the Air Quality Grant scheme 2022-23.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra did not receive or accept any applications from Greater Manchester Combined Authority or any councils within the combined authority as part of the Air Quality Grant scheme 2022-23.

79 applications were received from councils for this year's scheme. 44 applicants were provided with funding totalling £10.7 million, which is helping them to develop and implement measures to benefit schools, businesses and communities and reduce the impact of air pollution on people's health. Examples include supporting programmes that will educate doctors, nurses and social care workers about air quality; support for an e-cargo bike library helping local businesses in Norfolk to cut operating costs while lowering their emissions; and data collection to develop and deliver a traffic management plan that will reduce congestion and improve traffic flow across Derbyshire.

The air quality grant scheme sits alongside a further £883 million made available as part of the government's NO<sub>2</sub> Plan to support local authorities in cleaning up transport and cutting levels of nitrogen dioxide down to legal levels in the shortest possible time.

Under the 2017 UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) Concentrations, Greater Manchester authorities are required to take urgent action to address NO<sub>2</sub> pollution and develop plans to bring levels to within legal limits in the shortest possible time.

Greater Manchester's review in July 2022 identified they would not be fully compliant with legal limits before 2027 without action, with 79 points of exceedance predicted in 2023. We have reviewed Greater Manchester's proposals and identified a number of gaps in the evidence, meaning it is not yet possible to understand how the proposed approach will achieve compliance with NO<sub>2</sub> limits in the shortest possible time. We have requested further evidence from the Greater Manchester authorities to enable us to consider the plans further.

**■ Bovine Tuberculosis****Daniel Kawczynski:****[171378]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help the beef and dairy industry with the long-term costs of farms shut down due to bovine tuberculosis.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is acutely aware of the devastating personal impact of bTB on livestock owners and their families. Defra is working hard to support farmers whose herds experience a bTB breakdown and ensure that information and support is accessible.

Government funded statutory bTB testing is available to restore the bTB free status of affected herds, including supplementary TB blood testing that may be deployed to help speed up the resolution of persistent, recurrent, and other bTB breakdowns and reduce the risk of further breakdowns in such herds. Additionally, compensation payments are available to cattle farmers for all animals that need to be removed from their herds for bTB control purposes. Further details on funded TB testing and compensation can be found online at: [TBhub](#).

Defra is committed to helping farmers and their families tackle the mental health and livelihood impacts of bTB and has provided grant funding to the [Farming Community Network](#) since 2010.

Defra are also working in partnership with the livestock sector and a wide range of academics, charities, and other experts to deliver the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, supporting continual improvement in farm animal health and welfare. That includes a programme of financial support for farmers in the pig, cattle, sheep, and poultry sectors, to help them continually improve animal health and welfare.

**Coastal Areas: Environment Protection****Jim Shannon:**[\[171407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what funding her Department plans to provide for rock armour coastal pathway protection schemes; and if she will increase UK-wide funding for those schemes.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government announced in March 2020 a record £5.2 billion investment over 6 years in flood and coastal erosion schemes to better protect communities across England. Our £5.2 billion 2021-27 programme includes defences for the coast where it is sustainable and affordable to defend the coastline. In areas where it is not, other approaches such as managed realignment or transition will be needed.

Approximately 1/6th of the projects in the £5.2bn programme will help better protect coastal communities.

**Food: Prices****Beth Winter:**[\[172532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made a comparative assessment of (a) food price inflation and (b) trends in the level of profits of (i) major UK food and drink retailers and (ii) major food and drink manufacturers over the last five years.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra does not actively monitor the profits of food retailers and manufacturers. Defra relies on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for monthly food price inflation statistics, which stood at 18.2% for food and non-alcoholic beverages in the year to February 2023.

**Food: Profits****Beth Winter:**[\[172531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of profit made by large food and drink (a) retailers and (b) manufacturers in the last five years.

**Beth Winter:**[\[172533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of (a) anticipated pricing decisions and (b) anticipated profits of food and drink (i) manufacturers and (ii) retailers in the next 12 months.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra works with stakeholders across the food sector to promote and deliver HMG policy priorities. We do not actively monitor the profits of food retailers and manufacturers.

**Fruit and Vegetables: Prices****Daisy Cooper:**[\[172514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the extent to which recent increases in the costs of production incurred by British fruit and vegetables producers are reflected in the prices being paid by retailers to British suppliers.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Department has not made an assessment of the extent to which recent cost of production increases are reflected in the prices being paid by retailers.

We understand the importance of a well-functioning supply chain and regularly meet with industry representatives to discuss any issues being faced.

**Nutrition: Wales****Hywel Williams:**[\[172346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on ensuring that healthy foods are more accessible and affordable.

**Mark Spencer:**

Defra Ministers have regular discussions with Devolved Administration Ministers on a range of issues including at meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment,

Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA). Food supply and sustainability was discussed at the last IMG EFRA meeting which was held on 6 March.

I recognise this is a challenging time for consumers and we are taking a large number of steps to support people with the cost of living, including targeted support of £26 billion announced by the Chancellor.

Defra works closely with retailers and producers to explore measures they can take to ensure the availability of healthy, affordable food.

A healthy diet is a key component of good health and the Government advises people to follow the Eatwell Guide. Encouraging more people to follow the Eatwell Guide will have a substantial benefit on health as well as the environment.

### ■ Pigs: Animal Housing

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[173051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps to ban (a) pig farrowing crates, (b) sow stalls and (c) other caged farming systems.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government is committed to strengthening animal welfare standards and is currently examining the use of cages for laying hens and the use of farrowing crates for pigs. The UK banned sow stalls in 1999.

We will continue to work with retailers and producers to ensure we maintain and enhance the high standards of animal health and welfare we have in this country, including on our farms.

### ■ Plants: Genetically Modified Organisms

**Paul Girvan:**

[\[173072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department are taking to support research on gene edited plants; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of requiring researchers to have a license before conducting gene editing on animals.

**Mark Spencer:**

The Government has passed into law The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act that unlocks growth and innovation in the bioscience sector. Precision breeding technology such as gene editing, taking place in the UK's leading research institutes has the potential to tackle some of the major challenges of our time.

Relevant licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 continue to be required for any scientific research involving gene-editing in animals.

## ■ Protection of Badgers Act 1992

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[171379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to reform the Badger Protection Act 1992 so that sets are tested for the presence of bovine tuberculosis to confirm the absence of infection.

**Mark Spencer:**

There are no current plans to amend the Protection of Badgers Act, or to test badger setts for bovine TB.

## ■ Sewage and Water Abstraction: Water Companies

**Sir Charles Walker:**

[R] [172359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that (a) publicly and (b) privately owned water and sewerage companies fulfil the duty to provide details of water abstraction and sewerage discharges to the public upon request; and if she will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

All data held by the Environment Agency on water abstractions, sewage treatment effluents or sewage related discharges is Environmental Information and available on request or in some cases is published on GOV.UK.

Water and sewerage companies have published Event and Duration Monitoring (EDM) data relating to sewage discharges annually since 2020 that can be found [here](#). The 2022 data will be published at the end of March 2023.

Defra also publish a summary of water abstraction statistics. The most recent update was published in July 2022, including data up until 2018: [Water abstraction statistics: England, 2000 to 2018 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## ■ Sewage: Pollution

**Stephen Morgan:**

[171534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an estimate of the number of sewage discharges that took place in England and Wales in 2022.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency collates sewage discharge data from Water and Sewerage Companies from storm overflows in England, for 2020 and 2021 the data is published online [here](#). The 2022 data will be published at the end of March 2023.

## ■ Sewage: Pollution Control

**Stephen Morgan:**

[171533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress her Department has made on reducing sewage discharges.



**Rebecca Pow:**

In August 2022 HM Government published the [Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan](#), requiring water companies to deliver their largest ever infrastructure investment - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. £3.1 billion will be invested in storm overflow improvements between 2020 and 2025 (approximately 800 improvements). Water companies have already completed 43 storm overflow improvements schemes as part of their plans for the 2020-25 Price review period, and this will increase to almost 450 improvements by the end of next year.

In February 2023 I asked water and sewerage companies to set an action plan on every storm overflow in England, prioritising those that are spilling more than a certain number of times a year, and those spilling into bathing waters and high priority nature sites. I have also announced water companies will face higher penalties that are quicker and easier to enforce.

■ **Whisky: Exports****Colum Eastwood:**[\[170764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will introduce proposals to ensure statutory geographical indication protections for UK exporters of Irish Whiskey to help ensure alignment with the protections provided by the EU.

**Mark Spencer:**

Irish Whiskey is registered in both the UK and EU as a cross-border geographical indication. In line with our ambitious trade agenda, the UK government aims to expand on the current intellectual protections for Irish Whiskey in third countries, both through seeking amendments to their legislation and via geographical indication protection in trade agreements.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ **Afghanistan: Girls****Ms Anum Qaisar:**[\[169495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding provided by his Department for education projects for girls in Afghanistan.

**Ms Anum Qaisar:**[\[169496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for educational online learning platforms in Afghanistan.

**Leo Docherty:**

The UK Government has repeatedly condemned the Taliban's decisions to restrict women and girls' access to education, including through UN Security Council and



Human Rights Council resolutions and public statements, most recently on 13 January 2023. The Government continues to support the delivery of education, including through bilateral and multilateral contributions to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN partners, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Education Cannot Wait, and the Global Partnership for Education. Ministers and officials are engaging regularly with Afghan women, including those working on education and we are considering remote learning interventions, including online platforms.

## ■ Developing Countries: Sanitary Protection

**Ms Anum Qaisar:**

[\[169497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will expand the Women and Girls strategy to include provisions on menstrual health and hygiene.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), girls' education, and women's empowerment are all central commitments in the International Women and Girls Strategy.

Menstrual health and hygiene are a critical component of SRHR, and fundamental to women and girls' health, education and dignity. The FCDO already works to respond to this pressing need, through water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, as well as some focused on SRHR. For example, since 2019, the FCDO has supported the Government of Mozambique to deliver 28 inclusive, resilient school sanitation blocks that include integrated menstrual hygiene management facilities.

## ■ Diplomatic Service

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[172535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of UK diplomats posted outside of the UK are (a) male and (b) female.

**David Rutley:**

The FCDO's ambition is to be a truly inclusive organisation that reflects the diversity of the population we serve and we are proud to have almost closed the gender gap in overseas posts. 48 percent of FCDO staff currently posted overseas are women and 52 percent are men. We endeavour to close the gap with greater numbers of women joining the Senior Civil Service. Understanding any remaining barriers to progression for women and improving the representation of women in senior roles is a focus for FCDO this year.

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Mandarin Language**

**Catherine West:** [\[172466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the policy paper entitled Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world, published on 13 March 2023, how many people will be trained to speak Mandarin by his Department in the next 12 months.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

In FY22/23 the China Capability programme funded 100 new places in part-time Mandarin lessons for staff across government, from beginner to advanced level, which will be expanded over the next 12 months. This is in addition to part-time FCDO Mandarin language classes, which are available to any FCDO staff member on an optional basis. The FCDO also ensures there is a pipeline of staff undertaking full-time language training in preparation for specific postings to the China network.

**Pakistan: Violence**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[169426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the security situation in Lahore.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[169427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the police response to recent protests in Lahore.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[169428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Lahore.

**Leo Docherty:**

Managing the recent protests in Lahore is a matter for the Pakistani government. There is no place for violence in politics and the UK regularly engages the Government of Pakistan at a senior level on the need to uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. On 30 January, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, discussed the human rights situation with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada.

**Uganda: Homosexuality**

**Nadia Whittome:** [\[172548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Uganda on the Ugandan Government's Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2023.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

I have expressed the UK's deep disappointment with the decision of the Parliament of Uganda on 21 March 2023 to pass the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. The UK is alarmed by the increasing criminalization of LGBT+ people in Uganda. This Bill threatens minority rights and risks persecution and discrimination of all people across Uganda.

Amendments to the Bill, including introduction of the death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality', are very worrying. The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country.

**■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland****Hilary Benn:**[\[172343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether there are (a) any foodstuffs and (b) any manufactured goods that producers in Northern Ireland cannot sell to customers in Great Britain because of the EU regulations applying in Northern Ireland that are listed in the annexe to the Northern Ireland Protocol.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Government is unequivocal in its commitment for unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods to the whole United Kingdom market. That means a permanent guarantee of being able to place goods on the UK market in all scenarios - meaning no forms, checks, controls, or tariffs, or any barriers to the market whatsoever, whatever the future form of regulations in Northern Ireland. Those are protections that are enshrined in law and which we will build on further following the Windsor Framework.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Agency Nurses: Expenditure****Wes Streeting:**[\[171492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has set a target date for stopping NHS spending on off-framework agencies.

**Will Quince:**

While we have not set a target date for stopping National Health Service spending on off-framework agencies, we continue to bear down on their use.

A temporary workforce market allows the NHS to meet demand fluctuations without the need to increase capacity above that which would be required on a sustained basis. Staff can be drawn from internal staff banks or external agencies. Our policy is to reduce the use of agency staff and to prioritise the use of in-house staff banks. Together with NHS England, we continue to monitor the rate of agency spending, and support trusts to develop in-house NHS staff banks, helping to ensure they have staff available when required and to reduce their requirement for agency staff.

NHS England works in partnership with trusts, systems and approved framework operators to reduce/eliminate off-framework supply into the NHS in order to give assurance on quality and value for money standards of the staff working via agencies.

Since 2015, we have controlled agency spend through price caps and procurement frameworks. Trusts are only able to override the capped agency rates or use off-framework suppliers on exceptional patient safety grounds.

## ■ Cancer: Children and Young People

**Amy Callaghan:** [\[171562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Major Conditions Strategy will address the psychological needs of children, teenagers and young adults with cancer.

**Amy Callaghan:** [\[171563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the needs of children and young people with cancer are met in the Major Conditions Strategy.

**Helen Whately:**

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

This Strategy will draw on previous work on cancer, including over 5,000 submissions provided to the Department as part of our Call for Evidence last year. We will continue to work closely with stakeholders, citizens and the National Health Service in the coming weeks to identify actions for the Strategy that will have the most impact.

## ■ Community Diagnostic Centres

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[172451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Department of Health and Social Care press entitled One-stop shops for testing deliver over 3 million potentially lifesaving checks, tests and scans published 13 February 2023, whether it will be the 19 previously announced community diagnostic centres that will be expected to perform the 1.1 million tests, checks and scans each year.

**Will Quince:**

The National Health Service plans for the 19 newly announced community diagnostic centres to be able to deliver 1.1 million tests, checks and scans a year once fully operational.

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[172452]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 13 March 2023 to Question 159006 on Community Diagnostic Centres, if he will publish the weekly activity data that NHS England collects on community diagnostic centres.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England plans to publish community diagnostic centre activity for the 15 tests currently included as part of the DM01 data collection. The DM01 dataset is published monthly by NHS Digital, two months in arrears. The next publication will therefore cover activity in February 2023.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[172362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of pausing data collection for the covid-19 infection survey on pandemic preparedness.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The UK Health Security Agency will continue to publish regular reports on COVID-19 which will contribute to our pandemic preparedness. These include our weekly surveillance reports, which provide data on infection rates, hospitalisation numbers and vaccination uptake. We also maintain the ability to track the latest variants through our genomics capabilities which assess the risks posed by different strains of the virus.

The approach to COVID-19 surveillance is being actively reviewed to ensure it is proportionate, cost effective and considered alongside how we monitor a range of other infectious diseases that present a similar threat.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[172363]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for resuming data collection for the covid-19 infection survey.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The COVID-19 Infection Survey data collection was paused on 24 March. Final insights from this data are available at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19infectionsurveypilot/24march2023>

The approach to COVID-19 surveillance is being actively reviewed to ensure it is proportionate, cost effective and considered alongside how we monitor a range of other infectious diseases that present a similar threat.

We remain committed to monitoring the threat posed by COVID-19.

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[172364]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to monitor covid-19 (a) prevalence and (b) mutations, in the context of the suspension of the covid-19 infection survey.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will continue to monitor COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2 remains notifiable to UKHSA for all laboratories in England performing a primary diagnostic role. Laboratory reporting of SARS-CoV-2 cases will include any cases identified through testing in hospital undertaken to inform the clinical care of symptomatic patients. This will inform assessments such as positivity.

Within the community and primary care, real-time syndromic surveillance will continue via general practices. These systems will inform measures such as the incidence of symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection in the population.

UKHSA's COVID-19 surveillance work is published in weekly regular reports and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2022-to-2023-season>

UKHSA undertakes regular horizon scanning of all available SARS-CoV-2 genomic data for potentially significant mutations or combinations of mutations. This includes global data uploaded to international repositories, as well as all data generated from United Kingdom samples. In the absence of the COVID-19 Infection Survey, the UK data component may include samples from hospitals, adult social care, and some research studies.

## ■ Day Care Services

**Rachael Maskell:**

[170667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential benefits of providing adults using day care services with 30 hours of free care support each week.

**Helen Whately:**

We have no plans to make this assessment. The current charging system already provides support to those who need it most, with people with assets below £23,250 eligible for state financial support towards their care and support costs. The number of people able to access financial support will increase under the upcoming charging reforms, which will include an expansion of the means test.

When developing the charging reform policy, the Government considered various models and found that the planned changes provide the best balance between how many people are supported, how much they are supported and the cost to the taxpayer.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[172539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 148814 from the hon. Member for Stockport which was tabled on 20 February 2023.

**Helen Whately:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 24 March 2023 to Question [148814](#).

## ■ Diabetes: Learning Disability

**Ben Everitt:**

**[171590]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to create a national framework for a diabetes pathway to support people with learning difficulties.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS England have no plans to create a national framework for a diabetes pathway to support people with learning difficulties.

Integrated care boards are responsible for planning and commissioning diabetes care locally, in line with local population need and diabetes care pathways, these will vary by local systems and so cannot be nationally prescribed.

## ■ Endometriosis: Health Services

**Beth Winter:**

**[169461]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2022 to Question 104356 on Endometriosis: Health Services, what recent progress the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made on updating sections in its guideline on (a) diagnosing endometriosis, (b) surgical management and (c) surgical management if fertility is a priority.

**Beth Winter:**

**[169462]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2022 to Question 104356 on Endometriosis: Health Services, what progress the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made on assessing the needs and provision of mental wellbeing support for people with suspected or confirmed endometriosis.

**Maria Caulfield:**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is currently updating its guideline on endometriosis, which will update its recommendations on diagnosing endometriosis, surgical management and surgical management if fertility is a priority. Although intelligence identified a need for addressing mental wellbeing and support for women with endometriosis, NICE's review of the current guideline on endometriosis found no evidence that would support specific recommendations in this area.



The current guideline recognises that endometriosis can have a significant physical, sexual, psychological and social impact and that people with endometriosis may have complex needs and require long-term support. NICE currently recommends assessment of the individual support needs of people with suspected or confirmed endometriosis, taking into account their circumstances, symptoms, priorities, desire for fertility, aspects of daily living, work and study, cultural background, and their physical, psychosexual and emotional needs.

Additionally, NICE has published separate guidance on the recognition and management of depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem. NICE will also further explore the topic of mental wellbeing and support for people with endometriosis as part of its topic suite on women's and reproductive health.

NICE is currently recruiting to the expert Guideline Committee that will be responsible for developing its suite of guidelines related to women's and reproductive health, including the endometriosis guideline, and will publish further information about timescales on its website in due course.

#### ■ **Epilepsy: Asylum**

**Kirsten Oswald:**

[\[170639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the proportion of asylum applicants who have epilepsy.

**Helen Whately:**

We do not have estimates of the number of asylum applicants with epilepsy in the United Kingdom.

#### ■ **Gender Dysphoria: Health Services**

**Andrew Lewer:**

[\[162292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether current employees of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Gender Identity Development Service will lead the replacement multi-disciplinary teams within the new provider.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England's new draft interim service specification that went out to consultation proposes that the new multi-disciplinary teams will only be led by a medical practitioner. They will also have a broader composition of expertise than under the previous service, including paediatricians and experts in neurodiversity and autism.

NHS England's national transformation programme aims to ensure that relevant expertise is transferred to the new teams. The new providers and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust are working together to establish a process that is consistent with employment law and with National Health Service human resources best practice.



## ■ General Practitioners: East of England

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[161414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GP surgeries have closed since the start of 2022 in each county in the East of England.

**Neil O'Brien:**

This data is not held in the format requested.

## ■ Hays and Mitie: Contracts

**Justin Madders:**

[\[171434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 February to Question 150520 on Minimum Wage, what the total value of the contracts with the firms listed is.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 27 March 2023]:* The total value of the contracts awarded to Mitie Limited and Hays Specialist Recruitment by the Department in the last three years is £19,600,000 and £5,090,227 respectively.

## ■ Hospitals: Construction

**Daisy Cooper:**

[\[171556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of the new hospital programme in each hospital trust.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 27 March 2023]:* The Department has published figures for funding allocated to individual trusts in the New Hospital Programme for their new hospital schemes during financial year 2021/22, which is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1131791/s40-report-2021-2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1131791/s40-report-2021-2022.pdf)

Figures for 2022/23 will be published in the next report on Financial Assistance under Section 40 of the National Health Service Act 2006.

## ■ Huntington's Disease: Health Services

**Stephen Morgan:**

[\[171532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer on 9 March 2023 to Question 162275 on Neurology: Standards, what the integrated care systems' planned engagement is with the Huntington's Disease Association to improve (a) neurological services, (b) access to healthcare and (b) the care pathway for patients with Huntington's disease.

**Helen Whately:**

It would become a matter for the individual integrated care systems to determine the level of engagement they may have with the Huntington's Disease Association.

**■ NHS: Pensions****Wes Streeting:**[\[169354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public purse of the 2019-20 NHS Pensions Annual Allowance Charge Compensation Policy.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 27 March 2023]:* The 2019/20 Pensions Annual Allowance Compensation Charge reimbursement provision entered in the 2021/22 NHS England accounts is £290 million. This covers the commitment to pay clinicians in the National Health Service Pension Scheme for the effect of the Scheme Pays deduction on their income from the NHS Pension Scheme in retirement, in line with the ministerial direction to the Department and NHS England.

**■ NHS: Staff****Navendu Mishra:**[\[172534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to open a consultation that health and care organisations and people with long-term conditions such as Parkinson's disease can feed in to as part of the NHS workforce plan.

**Will Quince:**

NHS England has engaged with a broad range of stakeholders during the development of the long term workforce plan. The plan includes input from independent think tanks to test and refine the methodology. NHS England has also had discussion on the plan with many stakeholders including medical Royal Colleges, trade unions, regulators, system leaders, third sector organisations and representation from the wider workforce.

The Government has committed to publishing the long term workforce plan this year.

**■ Obesity: Wales****Hywel Williams:**[\[172345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on its long-term strategy to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales, including on (a) improving and enhancing front of pack nutrition labelling on pre-packed products and (b) creating conditions which incentivise advertising companies to promote healthier alternatives and products which support positive choices.

**Neil O'Brien:**

Ministers and officials have regular discussions with the Devolved Governments on measures to improve health and wellbeing across the United Kingdom. These include discussions on domestic strategies and the delivery of UK-wide policies to reduce obesity, including food labelling and supporting consumers to make healthier choices.

## ■ Parkinson's Disease: Health Services

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[172536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to increase the level of research on (a) understanding, (b) treating and (c) diagnosing Parkinson's.

**Will Quince:**

The Department funds research into Parkinson's disease through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

In the last five years, NIHR allocated approximately £14 million to specifically furthering the understanding of Parkinson's disease research for diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, NIHR has supported the delivery of over 175 studies relating to research into Parkinson's disease via the Clinical Research Network infrastructure.

Through NIHR-funded Biomedical Research Centres, NIHR is also supporting research into Parkinson's disease.

## ■ Suicide Prevention Fund

**Liz Twist:**

[\[170681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 4.24 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, on Suicide Prevention Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Grant Fund, by what mechanism the grant fund will be allocated; and what his timescale is for allocation of the funding.

**Maria Caulfield:**

*[Holding answer 27 March 2023]:* As the Chancellor announced in the Spring Budget, we will assign an extra £10 million over the next two years for a Suicide Prevention Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Grant Fund. Further information about the fund will be set out in due course.

## ■ Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

**Andrew Lewer:**

[\[156266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether employees of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust Gender Identity Development Service will lead the replacement multi-disciplinary teams within the new providers.

**Maria Caulfield:**

NHS England's new draft interim service specification that went out to consultation proposes that the new Multi-Disciplinary Teams will only be led by a medical practitioner. They will also have a broader composition of expertise than under the previous service, including paediatricians and experts in neurodiversity and autism.

NHS England's national transformation programme aims to ensure that relevant expertise is transferred to the new teams. The new providers and the Tavistock and

Portman NHS Foundation Trust are working together to establish a process that is consistent with employment law and with National Health Service Human Resources best practice.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[904349]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of the Misuse of Drug Act 1971 on the criminal justice system.

**Chris Philp:**

No recent assessment has been made. Assessments are made on a case by case basis as individual drugs or drug harms are identified. Drug Legislation forms part of our wider approach to preventing drug misuse alongside prevention and education, supporting treatment and recovery, and tackling the supply of illicit drugs.

**John McNally:**

[904357]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of the Misuse of Drug Act 1971 on the criminal justice system.

**Chris Philp:**

No recent assessment has been made. Assessments are made on a case by case basis as individual drugs or drug harms are identified.

Drug Legislation forms part of our wider approach to preventing drug misuse alongside prevention and education, supporting treatment and recovery, and tackling the supply of illicit drugs.

### ■ Asylum: Questionnaires

**Amy Callaghan:**

[169487]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the accessibility of (a) translators, (b) legal representatives and (c) other support networks for people completing the asylum questionnaire within the 20-day period.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Streamlined Asylum Process is one way in which we will clear the backlog and policy guidance on this was published on 23 February 2023 [Streamlined asylum processing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The asylum claim questionnaires are in English as is generally the case for immigration paperwork across the Department. If necessary, claimants can utilise legal representatives who can complete the questionnaire on their behalf. All asylum seekers are entitled to legal representation to support them, including with translation, through legal aid. Advice on obtaining a legal representative can be found on [Find an](#)

[immigration adviser: Search for an adviser - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). For those who are unable to return the questionnaire within 20 working days, a reminder will be sent to the claimant allowing a further 10-working days to complete and return it to the Home Office. A further extension can be requested where the timeframe cannot be met, for example because the claimant has serious medical conditions which is impacting their ability to respond to the questionnaire.

The intention of these questionnaires is to enable claimants to provide any further information about their claims after their initial screening interview upon arrival.

## ■ Asylum: Rwanda

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[171427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's press release of 18 March 2023 entitled UK and Rwanda strengthen agreement to deal with global migration issues, if she will publish the new addendum to the Migration and Economic Development Partnership referred to in that press release.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Rwanda will be published imminently on Gov.UK.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[171428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between the UK and Rwanda, and her designation of Rwanda as a safe country for the purposes of that agreement, of recent reports of threats by the government of Rwanda to remove asylum seekers and refugees from that country to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[171429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between the UK and Rwanda, and her designation of Rwanda as a safe country for the purposes of that agreement, of provisions in the extradition treaty recently agreed by the governments of Rwanda and Mozambique in relation to the potential return of asylum seekers and refugees from Mozambique to Rwanda.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Rwanda is a State Party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the seven core UN Human Rights Conventions and has been recognised globally for its record in welcoming and integrating migrants and refugees. Our own comprehensive assessment as set out in the relevant country policy and information notes (CPINs) Rwanda is a safe and secure country. Our CPINs are kept under constant review and updated periodically on the Gov.uk website. Any decision to relocate a person to Rwanda will be made on a case-by-case basis and take into account their individual circumstances and relevant country information.

Safeguards and assurances were considered throughout the development of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between the UK and Rwanda, and have been included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). An independent Monitoring Committee will monitor the entire relocation process and compliance with assurances in the Memorandum of Understanding, including the processing of asylum claims and provision of support in Rwanda.

## ■ Domestic Abuse

**Jim Shannon:**

**[169289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department are taking to encourage male victims to report incidences of domestic abuse.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The Government remains committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of sex.

The commitments set out in the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan apply to all victims of these crimes, including male victims. These documents aim to transform the whole of society's response to these crimes with actions to prevent abuse, pursue perpetrators, and support victims.

We do understand that there are specific challenges that male victims of domestic abuse face. We published the refreshed Supporting Male Victims policy document in 2022, which strengthens the government's response to male victims and includes information on the myths and stereotypes that can act as a barrier to reporting for male victims.

Whilst the Government fully acknowledges the range of barriers many male victims face, we encourage all victims to report incidents to the police, so perpetrators can be brought to justice. We also recognise that it is important for all victims to have confidence in policing. To support policing, we are:

- Providing up to £3.3 million to fund the rollout of Domestic Abuse Matters training to police forces which have yet to deliver it, or do not have their own specific domestic abuse training.
- Published updated guidance on the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), which enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex partner's previous abusive or violent offending.

In the Domestic Abuse Plan, we committed to a Home Office review into closed VAWG cases that have outcome 15 of 16 (evidential difficulties prevent further actions or victim does not support police action or withdraws support) to identify opportunities for improvements in the way these are used.

## ■ Embassies: Security

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[170698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the security of embassies and high commissions in the UK are maintained.

**Tom Tugendhat:**

The security and dignity of diplomatic missions in the UK, and their staff, is of utmost concern and His Majesty's Government fully recognises our obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view is a basic democratic right. But rights to lawful protest do not extend to violent or threatening behaviour.

Our protective security system is rigorous and proportionate. However, it is our long-standing policy not to provide detailed information on diplomatic security arrangements. To do so could compromise the integrity of those arrangements and affect the security of the individuals and locations concerned.

## ■ HM Passport Office: Staff

**Helen Morgan:**

[\[170773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure continuity of passport services in the event of a strike by Passport Office staff.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We are disappointed with the union's decision to strike.

We are working to manage the impact of strike action, whilst ensuring we can continue to deliver vital services to the public, with comprehensive contingency plans in place.

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

## ■ Home Office: Aviation

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[169227\]](#)

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

**Chris Philp:**

All overseas flights made by Home Office Ministers, including using non-scheduled air transport, are routinely released in quarterly Departmental transparency returns.

The latest transparency returns can be found here: [Home Office: ministerial gifts, hospitality, travel and meetings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](#).



If media attend Ministerial overseas visits, they are required to pay for their own travel.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

**John Penrose:** [\[173006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to reply to correspondence of (a) 24 January and (b) 16 February from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare relating to a constituent, Samantha Smith.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office replied on 17 February 2023.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[172408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it has been the policy of her Department to place people who were relocated to the UK through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy into hotel bridging accommodation in the period since 23 March 2022.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The use of hotels to accommodate those we are relocating and resettling from Afghanistan under both the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is a temporary solution. We do not want to see Afghan families in temporary accommodation for any longer than is absolutely necessary. We continue to work at pace with over 350 local authorities to find appropriate long-term accommodation for them.

■ **Refugees: English Language**

**Mr Tobias Ellwood:** [\[172357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to help refugees learn English.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We know that language skills are crucial to help people integrate into life in England, as well as to break down barriers to work and career progression.

The Department for Education funds English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Refugees and those granted humanitarian protection are eligible for full funding for ESOL through the AEB if they are unemployed and looking for work.

The Home Office provides funding to local authorities to support resettlement and integration costs for those who arrive through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy. In the first year this includes £850 per adult to cover additional English language provision.

We have also invested in a number of ways to improve English language provision for refugees, including providing £1.8mn in 2022/23 to support additional childcare so that refugees resettled to the UK (the UKRS) can access ESOL lessons; and £360,000 to improve regional coordination of ESOL for refugees.

The government is committed to offering an enhanced integration package for refugees arriving through safe and legal routes, to help them integrate and become self-sufficient more quickly. This will be delivered in England through the Refugee Employability Programme (REP), which has three key pillars: tailored employment support, integration support and English language training. More information about the Refugee Employability Programme can be found at:

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

## ■ Sexual Offences: Employment

**Kevin Foster:**

[904359]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on preventing convicted sex offenders from working as personal fitness instructors.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

The UK has some of the toughest powers in the world to deal with sex offenders and those who pose a risk, and we are committed to ensuring that the system is as robust as it can be.

Civil orders are available to the police (on application to the court) to manage the risk posed by registered sex offenders and those who pose a risk of sexual harm. Sexual Harm Prevention Orders can be applied to anyone convicted or cautioned for a sexual or violent offence, including where offences are committed overseas; and Sexual Risk Orders can be applied to any individual who poses a risk of sexual harm in the UK or abroad, even if they have never been convicted. Both orders can place a range of restrictions and/or requirements on individuals depending on the nature of the case, such as prohibiting offenders from engaging in certain kinds of employment. For both, breach is a criminal offence punishable by a maximum of 5 years' imprisonment

We are further strengthening the regime for managing registered sex offenders through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, and we continue to work with law enforcement agencies to ensure that the right powers are available for the authorities to tackle sexual crimes and bring perpetrators to justice.

## ■ Slavery: Albania

**Navendu Mishra:**

[172541]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of how many Albanian nationals in the UK are victims of (a) human trafficking and (b) modern slavery.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes statistics of potential victims of modern slavery referred to the National Referral Mechanism. These are based on potential victims who are identified by a range of first responders and are not estimates. The 2022 statistics can be found here;

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1139171/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1139171/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022.ods).

Further disaggregated data is published via the UK Data Service and can be accessed here:

<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=8910>

**■ UK Border Force: Patrol Craft****Mr Kevan Jones:****[172352]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with UK industry on the procurement of replacement Border Force vessels.

**Mr Kevan Jones:****[172353]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 1 December 2022 to Question 97480 on UK Border Force: Patrol Craft, when the formal launch of market engagement for the procurement of replacement Border Force vessels will take place.

**Robert Jenrick:**

Formal discussions on the procurement of replacement Border Force Vessels have not yet taken place.

No final decision has been taken on market engagement plans.

**■ Visas: Albania****Navendu Mishra:****[172540]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the most common visa used by Albanians residing in the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The Home Office publishes data on Entry clearance visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on granted visas, by nationality, are published in table Vis\_D02 of the '[Entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed datasets](#)'. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to Q4 2022 (October to December).

To note, the number of visas granted does not necessarily reflect the number of foreign nationals either residing or arriving in the UK.

## ■ Visas: Rohingya

**Ms Anum Qaisar:**

[\[169505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a visa scheme for Rohingya people to relocate to the UK.

**Robert Jenrick:**

The UK already welcomes refugees and people in need through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship, the Mandate Resettlement Scheme. Under these schemes, refugees are assessed and referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) according to their submissions criteria, which are based on at-risk people's needs and vulnerabilities. In addition to this, the Government provides a safe and legal route to bring families together through its refugee family reunion policy. The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people fleeing war and persecution. Between 2015 and December 2022, just under half a million (481,804) people were offered safe and legal routes into the UK. This allows immediate family members as defined in the Immigration Rules of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country.

## ■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

**Jeff Smith:**

[\[172441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has held recent discussions with EU Member States on extending the Youth Mobility Scheme.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We remain open to negotiating Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with other countries and territories including EU Member States. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK nationals, with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are unable to disclose the status of negotiations as they occur. Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

**Jeff Smith:**

[\[172442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government's policy is on extending the Youth Mobility Scheme to EU countries; and if she will make a statement.

**Robert Jenrick:**

We remain open to negotiating Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with other countries and territories including EU Member States. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK nationals, with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are unable to disclose the status of negotiations as they occur. Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

## JUSTICE

## ■ Community Orders

**Steve Reed:**[\[171423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of community service hours offenders have completed as part of community sentences in each probation region in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

**Damian Hinds:**

The table below shows the number of community service hours offenders have completed as a part of community sentences for the period between April 2017 to March 2022, segmented by Probation Region.

REGION	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	TOTAL
<b>East Midlands Region</b>	364,879	362,224	343,616	53,208	203,367	1,327,294
<b>East of England</b>	626,867	598,319	561,547	334,164	502,698	2,623,595
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	329,488	292,469	273,112	53,663	160,774	1,109,505
<b>Kent Surrey Sussex Region</b>	396,484	380,379	226,610	108,546	296,240	1,408,259
<b>London</b>	849,515	848,230	730,669	153,963	462,288	3,044,664
<b>North East Region</b>	190,754	197,154	194,359	59,581	154,040	795,888
<b>North West Region</b>	498,795	512,019	473,218	100,787	322,730	1,907,550
<b>South Central</b>	305,893	298,835	281,304	89,035	235,691	1,210,759
<b>South West</b>	333,797	353,762	327,011	87,780	295,717	1,398,068
<b>Wales</b>	370,215	405,205	374,047	107,297	275,242	1,532,005
<b>West Midlands Region</b>	548,199	515,099	479,172	90,408	298,205	1,931,084
<b>Yorkshire</b>	551,119	516,715	491,569	98,734	335,566	1,993,703

REGION	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	TOTAL
and The Humber						
Unknown Region**	17,690	31,223	113,544	19,742	41,744	223,943
National Total	5,383,697	5,311,633	4,869,778	1,356,908	3,584,303	20,506,318

The table above provides the last full five years of community service hours completed by offenders on Unpaid Work requirements.

These have been segmented by Probation Region. Where prior to unification (July 2021), locations have been mapped to current region. Where mapping has not been possible, due to ambiguous locations, these have been grouped as 'Unknown Region'.

A significant dip in performance can be seen in the years 2019/20 and 2020/21, which is attributed to the pandemic. Community Payback was severely affected by projects, and organisations that provided them, being closed, along with the social distancing rules making it difficult for delivery to continue as normal.

#### ■ Compensation: Court Orders

**Priti Patel:** [\[169263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many compensation orders were issued in each of the last five years; and what the total value of those compensation orders was.

**Priti Patel:** [\[169264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many compensation orders were issued for each (a) offence and (b) sentence type in each of the last five years; and what the total value compensation orders was for each offence type.

**Priti Patel:** [\[169266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the amount was of each of the 20 highest compensation orders issued against offenders in each of the last five years; and to which offence each compensation order was related.

**Priti Patel:** [\[169267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many compensation orders were issued for each offence type by (a) magistrate's courts and (b) crown courts in each of the last five years.

**Priti Patel:**

**[169268]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) highest, (b) lowest and (c) average value of compensation orders issues in the last five years by offence type in the (i) Magistrates' and (ii) Crown Courts.

**Edward Argar:**

The Ministry of Justice has published information on the number and amount of compensation orders issued in courts on a principal and all-disposal basis, by offence type, in the [Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022](#). This information, split by court type, is available in the [Magistrates' court data tool: 2021](#) and the [Crown Court data tool: 2021](#). This information for the calendar year of 2022 is due for publication in May.

Please see the accompanying tables for:

- Total value of compensation orders issued;
- The number of defendants issued with a compensation order, by principal sentence outcome and by offence group;
- The 20 largest compensation orders issued in each of the last 5 years, and the offence this was given as a sentence outcome for; and
- Minimum and maximum value of compensation orders issued, by court type.

Compensation is presented in these tables on an all-disposal basis; this is where compensation is recorded in the four most severe disposals. Data in these tables relate to the years ending June 2018 to June 2022 in England and Wales.

Figures on total compensation and amount paid, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, are held on HMCTS data systems and presented in [Table A2 in Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly: June 2022 publication](#). These will differ from the court outcomes figures, which record where the compensation was in the four most serious sentences delivered by the court for the defendant.

Figures on the amount of compensation orders issued is published in the HMCTS trust statements for [2017/18](#), 2018/19, [2019/20](#), [2020/21](#) and [2021-22](#).

Courts may impose a compensation order on an offender requiring them to make financial reparation to the victim for any personal injury, loss or damage resulting from the offence. Compensation may be ordered for such amount as the court considers appropriate having regard to any evidence including any representations made by the offender or prosecutor. There is no limit on the value of a single compensation order handed down to an adult offender. However, in determining whether to make a compensation order, and the amount to be paid under such an order, the court must take into account the financial circumstances of the offender. Courts are required to strike a balance between seeking reparation and not imposing debts that are unrealistic or unenforceable.

**Attachments:**

1. Table [2023-03-28 PQ 169263 - 169264 - 169266 - 169267 - 169277 Table.xlsx]



**Priti Patel:**

[\[169265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many compensation orders issued in each of the last five years were (a) paid in full, (b) partly paid and (c) unpaid by the offender; and what the total value was in each case.

**Edward Argar:**

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Convictions

**Priti Patel:**

[\[169262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders sentenced in each of the last five years have (a) one conviction, (b) two convictions and (c) three or more convictions for a (i) knife related crime, (ii) firearms related crime, (iii) rape and (iv) sexual offences.

**Edward Argar:**

For parts (i) and (ii), details on whether an offence was firearms related or knife related may be held on court record but to examine individual court records would be of disproportionate cost.

**The below table shows the number of offenders sentenced for any offence type in each of the years 2001 to 2021 <sup>(1,2)</sup>, with a) one prior conviction b) two prior convictions c) three or more convictions <sup>(2)</sup> for previous sexual offences <sup>(3)</sup> and previous rape <sup>(4)</sup> offences**

YEAR			NUMBER OF OFFENDERS			
Previous sexual offence convictions			Previous rape offence convictions			
1 previous	2 previous	3 or more previous	1 previous	2 previous	3 or more previous	
2021	6078	871	379	1171	28	4
2020	5515	779	367	1012	18	3
2019	6677	913	431	1253	28	1
2018	6837	912	464	1309	34	6
2017	7230	1020	490	1359	40	3
2016	7337	1024	497	1336	33	2
2015	7330	948	505	1260	24	3
2014	7153	1000	446	1247	38	4
2013	6952	936	476	1162	45	1

	YEAR	NUMBER OF OFFENDERS				
2012	6957	935	479	1142	32	2
2011	7041	960	455	1130	34	3
2010	6999	979	458	1190	29	3
2009	7017	939	472	1193	34	2
2008	6768	1000	517	1177	32	1
2007	6755	1069	519	1134	40	3
2006	6552	1088	525	1124	38	2
2005	6581	1036	522	1056	31	0
2004	6672	1094	565	1091	40	0
2003	6848	1026	530	1083	34	0
2002	6826	992	478	1085	33	1
2001	6667	930	456	1024	30	0

**Source:** MoJ's extract of the Police National Computer

1) Offenders are counted once in each of the years in which they received a conviction, where the offender was sentenced in multiple years, they will appear more than once in the table

2) Figures for the years 2020 and 2021 will be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

3) Previous convictions are counted based on the number of occasions on which offenders have previously received a conviction for any offences recorded on the Police National Computer, including some offences committed outside of England and Wales. Where there were multiple offences on the same occasion, only the primary offence as recorded on the Police National Computer would be counted.

4) Previous sexual offences will include previous rape offences, therefore the individuals counted in the previous rape convictions column, will also appear in the previous sexual offence columns.

Rape offences include attempted rape.

## ■ Family Courts: Legal Aid Scheme

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[172402]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment has he made of the impact of civil legal aid cuts on the number and proportion of litigants in person in the family courts.

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[172403]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of (a) trends in the level of legal representation in the family courts since the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 came into force and (b) trends on the timeliness of cases from commencement to disposal (c) the impact of lower levels of legal representation on the (i) timeliness of cases and (ii) court backlog.

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[172404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure the civil legal aid review helps tackle backlogs in the family courts.

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[172405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment has he made of the potential impact of providing more (a) scope for legal advice and (b) opportunities for input from parents at the pre-proceedings stage of public law proceedings on trends in the level of those proceedings.

**Mike Freer:**

Information on legal representation (including the number of Litigants in Person) is published in Family Courts Statistics Quarterly with further information on legal representation status of applicants and respondents by case type:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2022>.

Information on the number of disposals and average time to first definitive disposal, broken down by parties with legal representation and case type is routinely published by the Ministry of Justice and can be found via Family Court Statistics Quarterly:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2022>.

The Review of Civil Legal Aid will consider the civil legal aid system in its entirety; from how services are procured, how well the current system works for users and how civil legal aid impacts the wider justice system.

Whilst the Review is not looking specifically at addressing delays in the family courts, more widely we are maximising sitting days to work through the outstanding caseload. In the family court, we sat to our highest ever level in 2021 – just under 56,000 days in public law and just under 83,000 days in private law. This is 2% higher than our sitting day levels in 2020 for public law and 16% higher than our sitting days in 2020 for private law.

We have significantly increased funding to improve waiting times in the family courts. This includes increasing funding to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) by £8.4 million this financial year to deal with more open active cases.

We are modernising our systems through the HMCTS Reform programme to improve efficiency by removing unnecessary forms and duplication.

We have made greater use of fee-paid and part-time judges by lifting the number of days that fee-paid judges can sit.

We have also made provisions to ensure that fee-paid judiciary from elsewhere in England and Wales can now hear suitable cases remotely, to increase the judicial resource available to hear cases from London and the South East and reduce delays in those regions.

Legal aid is available in certain family matters, such as public family law cases which fall under the Children Act 1989. These types of cases include proceedings relating to whether a child should be taken into care or who should have parental responsibility or contact.

In March 2022, we published a detailed consultation on legal aid means-testing arrangements. The consultation proposed a broad suite of changes to the civil and criminal legal aid means test, with the aim of ensuring access to justice.

The Department for Education is working with the Public Law Working Group sub-group on care proceedings reform to bring learning from Family Drug and Alcohol Courts and other problem-solving approaches into public law proceedings, to make proceedings less adversarial and improve parents' engagement in the process.

#### ■ Legal Aid Scheme

**Mr Virendra Sharma:**

[\[904355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of legal aid.

**Mike Freer:**

On 30 November 2022, we published our full response to the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review and consultation on policy proposals. We are boosting the system with upfront investment to address the most urgent concerns, including uplifts of 15% to most legal aid fee schemes.

We have also launched a review of civil legal aid to identify options which will inform our long-term strategy for improving the sustainability and effectiveness of the civil legal aid system.

In March 2022, we published a detailed consultation on legal aid means-testing arrangements. The consultation proposed a broad suite of changes to the civil and criminal legal aid means test, which will make civil legal aid available to 2 million more people, and to 3.5 million people in the magistrates' court.

#### ■ Ministry of Justice: Consultants

**Angela Rayner:**

[\[172422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department spent on external recruitment consultants in 2022; and with which consultants the contracts were held.

**Mike Freer:**

The full spend data for calendar year 2022 is not yet available.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Minimum Wage**

**Justin Madders:**

**[172430]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 6 March 2023 to Question 156177 on Ministry of Justice: Minimum Wage, what the total value was of those companies' contracts.

**Mike Freer:**

The value of the relevant contracts are:

- Calor Gas, £307,000. Reference

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/134be1dc-a93f-4fc0-8159-c39aae7a3c2f?origin=SearchResults&p=1>(opens in a new tab).

- Centre Circle Event Management Ltd, £45,000. Reference

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/8ba63863-9e53-4f4d-8553-fcc32a38ea58?origin=SearchResults&p=1>(opens in a new tab).

Our arrangement with Hays is a call-off arrangement with no guaranteed level of commitment, [Call Off Contract from Public Sector Resourcing \(PSR\) - Contracts Finder](#).

As previously noted, all the arrears identified has been cleared and adjustments made to the administrative processes of each company.

■ **Reoffenders**

**Priti Patel:**

**[169260]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offenders have (a) 50 to 100 and (b) 100 or more convictions; and how many were (i) serving a custodial sentence, (ii) on an electronic tag and (iii) in the community as of 20 March 2023.

**Edward Argar:**

We do not hold the data requested.

**Priti Patel:**

**[169261]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions were held by the 30 recorded offenders with the most convictions as of 20 March 2023; and if he will list the offences those individuals have received convictions for.

**Edward Argar:**

We do not hold the data requested.

■ **Youth Custody: Staff**

**Anna McMorris:**

**[172488]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of staffing levels across the youth estate.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Youth Custody Service's first priority is the safety and well-being of the young people in its care. In the current challenging circumstances, that requirement continues to be paramount. Staff retention and recruitment is a challenge in all parts of HMPPS, not only within the youth secure estate. We are actively working to reduce high turnover of staff in the Young Offender Institutions. In addition to changes to national pay progression arrangements, we are focusing on action to improve retention. Exit interviews are made available to every leaver, to help us understand and address the reasons why staff may decide to leave.

Since December 2022, there has been a reduction in resignations by frontline staff across the Young Offender Institution sector. Whilst staffing is challenging in the Secure Training Centre too, this has not affected the levels of regime for education or enrichment available to children.

**LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES****■ Buildings: Safety****Matthew Pennycook:**[\[172465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to his oral contribution in the statement on building safety on Tuesday 14 March 2023, Official Report, column 727, if he will publish key features of the Government's new responsible actors scheme by 24 March 2023.

**Lee Rowley:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the key features [document](#).

**■ Freeports****Emily Thornberry:**[\[169223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2022 to Question 11601, on Freeports, if he will publish the agreed (a) data indicators and (b) baseline data that will form the basis for the monitoring and evaluation of the Freeports Programme.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[169224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in relation to the contract agreed with Ove Arup & Partners Ltd. on 14 January 2022 (procurement reference CPD4122058), if he will provide a list of the (a) dates and (b) subjects of all evaluation reports provided to his Department under the terms of that contract as of 20 March 2023.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The [Freeports Monitoring and Evaluation \(M&E\) strategy](#) was published 6th May 2023. A subsequent update was published in the [Freeports annual report](#), including

an executive summary of the Framework at Annex C. Outputs of the department M&E activities will be published in subsequent annual reports.

## ■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme

**Paula Barker:**

[169421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of Ukrainian households admitted under the Homes for Ukraine scheme at risk of homelessness in each of the next two years.

**Felicity Buchan:**

We want to avoid households becoming homeless wherever possible. Local authorities provide a statutory safety net Ukrainian households can access if they need help.

Government is monitoring the number of Ukrainian households seeking homelessness assistance through our management information, which is published monthly on gov.uk [here](#).

To help prevent homelessness, we have announced £150 million for councils across the UK, as well as a £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund in England to help house Ukrainians. This is on top of the £2 billion in funding Government is spending over three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in England.

## ■ Infrastructure: Capital Investment

**Julian Knight:**

[169319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to give communities more involvement in decisions on infrastructure investment.

**Rachel Maclean:**

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer I gave to Question UIN [166395](#) on 23 March 2023.

## ■ Investment Zones

**Bill Esterson:**

[172390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to paragraph 4.117 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, how much funding he plans to allocate to a successful region under the Investment Zones policy over (a) one year and b) five years.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[172411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to work with mayoral combined authorities in preparation for the application process for investment zones.



**Dehenna Davison:**

As set out in the Investment Zones [policy prospectus](#), officials will work in partnership with places, and their local stakeholders, to co-develop their Investment Zone proposals.

**■ Levelling Up Fund****Dan Jarvis:**[\[172410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has provided feedback on bids to all (a) local and (b) mayoral combined authorities which were not successful in the second round of funding under the Levelling Up Fund.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Officials have provided feedback to local authorities and mayoral combined authorities whose bids have not received funding.

**■ Local Government: Standards****Rachael Maskell:**[\[169347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of economic departments within local authorities; and if he will take steps to establish an assessment system to measure their capability.

**Lee Rowley:**

Local authorities are independent public bodies responsible to their electorate for the decisions they take.

Local authorities are required by law to publish a statement of accounts, alongside the opinion of the external auditor, on an annual basis.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Sir Stephen Timms:**[\[172320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to reply to the letter dated 13 January 2023 from the Rt hon. Member for East Ham, ref ST102443.

**Lee Rowley:**

A response was issued to the Rt. Hon. Member on 27 March 2023.

**■ Parking: Fees and Charges****Daisy Cooper:**[\[169444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March to Question 156100, when his Department plans to (a) complete and (b) publish its impact assessment on levels of private parking charges and additional fees.

**Dehenna Davison:**

The Impact Assessment and consultation on levels of private off-street parking charges and additional fees will be published in due course. Announcements will be made in the usual way.

**■ Private Rented Housing: Social Security Benefits****Afzal Khan:**[\[172510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to prevent landlords from refusing to rent to people who claim universal credit, housing benefit, disability benefits or tax credits.

**Afzal Khan:**[\[172511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is providing support to local authorities to help tackle potential discrimination against tenants in the private rental sector who receive housing benefits.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Everyone in the private rented sector is entitled to a safe and decent home.

The White Paper 'A Fairer Private Rented Sector' sets out our proposals to ban 'no DSS' blanket ban practices.

**■ Refugees: Afghanistan and Ukraine****Dan Jarvis:**[\[172412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which councils have received new funding to house refugees from (a) Ukraine and (b) Afghanistan; and how many refugees his Department plans to support with this funding.

**Felicity Buchan:**

We are announcing £35 million of new funding to enable local authorities to provide increased support for Afghan households to move from hotels into settled accommodation.

Further to the announcement made earlier today, the Department for Levelling Up is expanding the Local Authority Housing Fund for England with an additional £250 million, primarily targeted at Afghan arrivals. This is in addition to the £500 million already allocated to support areas with the highest existing housing pressures and those that are facing the most significant housing pressures as a result of the recent Ukrainian arrivals.

Where sponsorships can no longer continue for the financial year 2023/24, all councils will receive help to house Ukrainians through a one-off pot of government funding worth £150 million.

**■ Rented Housing: Reform****Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[169251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if it remains his policy to introduce a Renters' Reform Bill during this Parliament.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Further to the answer given to Question UIN [147433](#) on the 27 February 2023, this remains a priority for the Government.

**■ Social Rented Housing: Disability****Lee Anderson:**[\[169476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help increase the (a) number and (b) proportion of social houses built with adaptations for people with disabilities.

**Dehenna Davison:**

Following our consultation on options to raise the accessibility of new homes, we published a government response on 29th July 2022, setting out our plans to mandate the current optional and higher M4(2) requirement in Building Regulations as a minimum standard for all new homes, including new social homes. Government will consult further on the technical changes to the Building Regulations to mandate the higher M4(2) accessibility standard.

Additionally, since 2010 Government has invested £4.8 billion into the Disabled Facilities Grant (2010-11 to 2022-23), delivering an estimated 490,000 home adaptations.

The DFG is tenure neutral, so irrespective of the type of property in which a person lives, eligible disabled people should be able to receive the home adaptations that they need subject to a means test and assessment of need.

The £11.5 billion Affordable Homes programme (2021-26) (England) also includes delivery within the programme of new supply of specialist supported housing, including for people with disabilities, alongside investment through DHSC's Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund (England).

**■ Social Services: Finance****Sarah Owen:**[\[169499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has held with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on long-term funding for social care.

**Lee Rowley:**

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ **Bus Services: Northern Ireland**

**Colum Eastwood:**

[\[170763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps he is taking to ensure the continuation of Easilink bus services in rural areas in Northern Ireland in the next financial year.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

Transport is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland. The Department for Infrastructure has the responsibility for matters relating to the provision of rural community transport services in Northern Ireland.

In the absence of functioning devolved institutions, Northern Ireland Office officials are working with their counterparts in the Northern Ireland Executive Department of Finance on the budget allocations for the next financial year. Based on the Northern Ireland budget position for the 2022-23 financial year, the expectation is that there will be impacts on people in Northern Ireland as a result of the difficult decisions needed in order for Northern Ireland Executive departments to live within their budgets.

It remains the UK Government's firm view that the right people to make these decisions are locally elected politicians in a fully functioning Northern Ireland Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly. In the absence of these, it will be for the relevant Northern Ireland Executive department, in this case, the Department for Infrastructure, to manage its funding including provision for rural community transport.

### ■ **Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla: Northern Ireland**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[169293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the Government will provide funding to churches and community groups in Northern Ireland to help them celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III; and whether any royal visits are planned to Northern Ireland during the Coronation celebrations.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Northern Ireland Office officials are working closely with officials from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in order to provide funding to Local Authorities for local screenings of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III at locations across Northern Ireland.

There is no additional central Government funding available specifically for other organisations since every effort is being made to ensure that any activities and programmes for the Coronation do not impose an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer. It should be noted Lottery distributors and Local Authorities have made funds available for community events and many communities will fund their own activities, as they have done to mark other significant milestones in our shared history.

Visits to Northern Ireland by members of the Royal Family are a matter for the Royal Household.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Billing**

**Seema Malhotra:**

**[170625]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the proportion of invoices his Department paid to small and medium-sized enterprises within five days in (a) the 2021-2022 financial year and (b) each of the last 12 months.

**Mr Steve Baker:**

All Government Departments publish payment performance quarterly showing the percentage of invoices paid in 5 days, the percentage of invoices paid in 30 days, and net debt interest liability. This is available on GOV.UK. The Northern Ireland Office's payment performance is available at:

[NIO Prompt Payment Data Link](#)

In addition, in accordance with regulation 113 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, Contracting Authorities are required to publish annually the percentage of invoices paid in 30 days online. This is available as part of the annual report for 21/22:

[Annual Report and Accounts 21/22](#)

The Procurement Bill, currently passing through Parliament, will create a simpler and more transparent procurement regime that will further open up public procurement to SMEs. The Bill includes a new duty on contracting authorities to have regard to the particular barriers facing SMEs. Specifically, the Procurement Bill will imply 30 day payment terms into every sub-contract that is substantially for the purpose of performing a public contract. This will ensure SMEs at every tier of the public supply chain can benefit from faster payments, even if 30 day terms aren't explicitly written into the contract.

## SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ **Clinical Trials: Reviews**

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[169273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the press release entitled Lord O'Shaughnessy to lead independent review into UK clinical trials, published on 20 February 2023, how many staff from the Department of (a) Science, Innovation and Technology, (b) Health and Social Care and (c) Business and Trade will be involved in the review.

**George Freeman:**

The Office for Life Sciences is providing secretariat support for the review and is a joint unit between Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. Three members of OLS staff are involved in this

secretariat function as part of their roles. No members of the Department for Business and Trade are providing direct support. Officials from both DHSC and DSIT are providing evidence for the review as experts in Clinical Research.

## ■ Innovation and Research

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[169272\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2023 to Question 132389 on Innovation and Research, what (a) workstreams, (b) initiatives and (c) processes her Department plans to use the data collected and digital interactive cluster data mapping tool for.

**George Freeman:**

More places in the UK hosting world-leading and globally connected innovation clusters will create more jobs, productivity and growth. The interactive digital tool and report we will publish, which will map and explain these clusters, will be crucial in helping us develop future policies and attract private sector investment to grow them. We expect them to be used by local leaders to showcase and galvanise awareness of their strengths; government to better understand the impact of our policies and build on what works; and investors to more easily spot opportunities to invest in our world-leading R&D.

## ■ Research: Expenditure

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[169274\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the Office for National Statistics dataset entitled Business enterprise research and development UK, published on 22 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of trends in the level of research and development expenditure in the (a) electricity, (b) gas, (c) steam and (d) air conditioning supply Standard Industrial Classification divisions since 2018; and if she will provide a further breakdown of research and development expenditure in those industries.

**George Freeman:**

Table 8 of the ONS BERD release included figures for R&D performed by businesses by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) division. This included the following estimates:

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total UK business R&D	£40,993m	£42,184m	£43,995m	£46,929m
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	£78m	£164m	£102m	£353m

The new ONS BERD data shows different SIC divisions with different changes within an overall increase in total R&D expenditure. The ONS figures provide the current best estimate of R&D expenditure at the total UK level which have been validated against other available data. However, there is less data for validation and increased uncertainty in the estimates below the total BERD figures. The Government looks forward to further improvements from the ONS in how the BERD statistics are compiled in future releases.

## ■ Science and Technology: Public Consultation

**Jo Gideon:**

[\[169472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of consulting people under the age of 18 on its science and technology policies.

**George Freeman:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK is at the forefront of research and innovation. This means we need to inspire young people who are our future decision-makers and researchers and show that research is something to which they can contribute and benefit from throughout their lives.

The Government supports this through programmes like UKRI's £35m 'Adolescence, mental health and the developing mind' which includes a youth advisory group.

The Government also supports 'Future Forums', managed by the British Science Association, which seeks young people's views on science policy and the role of science in solving the issues of tomorrow.

## ■ Science: Finance

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[172406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March to Question 166217 on Research: Finance, if she will list the range of funding mechanisms and from which department or other budget holder each funding mechanism will come.

**George Freeman:**

At the 2023 Spring Budget, the Government announced a package of measures to accelerate the progress of our leading digital technology and life science industries. The Department for Science, Technology and Innovation is now working closely with its partner organisations to ensure funding for the newly announced programmes is delivered effectively and through the appropriate mechanisms.



**TRANSPORT****■ Driving Tests: Greater Manchester****Afzal Khan:**[\[173086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time was for a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency practical driving test in (a) Greater Manchester and (b) West Didsbury test centres in the last 12 months.

**Afzal Khan:**[\[173087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help prevent approved driving instructors selling practical driving exams for a profit.

**Mr Richard Holden:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is working hard to provide as many practical driving test appointments as possible at all test centres. As a result of the measures already taken by the DVSA, overall, since April 2021, an estimated 813,000 additional test slots have now been created. On average, the DVSA is creating approximately 35,300 extra test slots each month.

The average time between booking and taking a practical car test in Greater Manchester and West Didsbury test centres over the last 12 months is 15.2 weeks and 15.6 weeks respectively. As of 27 March 2023, there are 1,847 driving tests available in Greater Manchester and 465 available at West Didsbury.

To prevent the booking and re-selling of driving test appointments, the DVSA has:

- stopped accepting new automatic online registrations to use its tests booking service – any new applications must be made by email, where they'll be thoroughly checked by the DVSA;
- stopped accepting any new registrations from companies who do not directly employ a driving instructor;
- removed registrations not linked to driving instructors;
- reduced the number of times a driving test appointment can be changed from 10 to the pre-pandemic limit of 6 - if changes are required after reaching this limit, approved driving instructors or candidates will have to cancel the test and rebook it; and
- updated the test booking service terms and conditions to make it clear that users must not book tests and sell them for profit. Users found breaching the terms and conditions may have their accounts closed.

**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Jim Shannon:**[\[171406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide funding to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points in rural areas.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the deployment of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure happens across all areas of the country.

More than 189 different local authorities across the UK, including those in rural areas, have been awarded over £55 million funding through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme which will see more than 14,000 chargepoints installed across the UK.

From 1 April 2022, the Government expanded the Workplace Charging Scheme to support small accommodation businesses and charities to install chargepoints for their guests and visitors. This should help provision more chargepoints in rural areas, for example it should support places like village halls to provide chargepoints for their communities.

In England, the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund will address regional charging inequality and ensure no part of the country is left behind. The Government has developed a data-led allocation model to award the funding, which considers factors such as the level of rurality and the number of vehicles without off-street parking within the local authority.

The majority of funding programmes for charging infrastructure are available on a UK wide basis. Where public funding initiatives are planned for England only, corresponding additions are usually allocated to the devolved administrations through Barnett consequential. It is then for those nations to decide how that funding should be spent.

**Damien Moore:****[171539]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department provides to local councils to increase the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the deployment of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure happens across all areas of the country.

Over the last six years, 189 different local authorities have been awarded over £55 million of funding through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme, which will see more than 14,000 chargepoints installed across the UK.

To accelerate this roll-out, the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund Pilot was launched in August 2022, and expanded further in February 2023. The pilot provides almost £60 million in public and private investment to 25 different local authorities across England and will deliver over 3,400 chargepoints and 600 gullies for drivers without off-street parking.

The LEVI Pilot is supporting the development of the full LEVI Fund. One aim of the fund is to address regional charging inequality and ensure no part of the country is left behind. The Department has developed a data-led allocation model to award the funding, which considers factors such as the level of rurality and the number of vehicles without off-street parking within the local authority.

**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[172537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department has provided to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to increase the provision of electric vehicle charging points in that borough.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has various grant funding schemes to assist with the cost of buying and installing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.

As of 1 January 2023 in Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, 2,178 charging devices had been installed at domestic properties through the Department's Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS), with a total grant value of £882,259. In addition, 54 charging devices were installed at domestic properties through the Domestic Recharge Scheme, the predecessor to the EVHS. In workplaces, 211 sockets have also been installed through the Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS), with a total grant value of £81,494.

Last year, the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to all UK local authorities to encourage them to engage with the upcoming Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund and the existing On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS). To date, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council has not applied to the ORCS scheme.

Officials from the Department have since met with Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to discuss the LEVI Fund, which will provide resource and capital funding to councils in England to plan and deliver local charging infrastructure. In February 2023, Greater Manchester Combined Authority was allocated resource funding through the LEVI Fund to support EV infrastructure plans across the region. This includes working with their constituent authorities, such as Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.

## ■ Railways: Mobile Phones

**Afzal Khan:**

[\[169477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of mobile network coverage on long distance rail routes.

**Huw Merriman:**

The Department for Transport is continuing to work closely with Network Rail to reduce the commercial and technical barriers to improving mobile connectivity along the entire rail corridor. We are also currently working with Ofcom and Network Rail to baseline existing Mobile Network Operator signal coverage on the railway through the installation and maintenance of signal measurement equipment on Network Rail's yellow maintenance trains.

**■ Transport****Mike Amesbury:** [\[169415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his planned timetable is for bringing forward a transport bill.

**Huw Merriman:**

We will progress legislation when parliamentary time allows.

**TREASURY****■ British Patient Capital****Chi Onwurah:** [\[172407\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March to Question 167105 on British Patient Capital, if he will provide a breakdown by English region of the £900 million of finance provided by the bank outside London.

**Andrew Griffith:**

The British Business Bank (BBB) has an objective to identify and help to reduce imbalances in access to finance for smaller businesses across the UK. In 2021/22 the Bank deployed £1,409m of finance, £502m of which was deployed in London.

This means that the Bank exceeded its target of deployment of regional finance outside of London for 2021/22.

**■ Business Rates and VAT****Bob Seely:** [\[172512\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of business rates and VAT for (a) micro businesses and (b) SMEs.

**Victoria Atkins:**

On business rates, the Government has announced a package of support worth £13.6 billion for businesses over the next five years. Together with the revaluation, this package ensures bills will more accurately reflect current market values whilst protecting businesses from large bill increases.

The Government's generous Small Business Rate Relief scheme sees over a third of properties (720,000) pay no business rates at all, with an additional 76,000 in the taper seeing their bills reduced. Combined with an updated Retail, Hospitality & Leisure (RHL) relief, 80% of RHL properties will see bills fall or stay the same at the 2023 Revaluation, protecting the UK's high street businesses.

The Government is also providing 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.

The Government recognises that accounting for VAT can be a burden on businesses. This is why, at £85,000, the UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU Member State and the second highest in the OECD. This keeps the majority of UK businesses out of VAT altogether.

Although the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no current plans to change the levels of VAT.

## ■ Charities: Government Assistance

**Damian Green:**

[\[172319\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Spring Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, which (a) activities and (b) charities will be eligible for the £5 billion support to the charitable sector; and how much each of them has received.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Government does not hold information on charities' activities. The powers within the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 impose a statutory duty on HMRC to maintain taxpayer confidentiality, which means that it cannot comment on the affairs of individual charities. This includes how much charities have received in support through tax reliefs.

## ■ Childcare: Tax Allowances

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[170765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) forecast and (b) actual expenditure was for the tax-free childcare scheme in the last three financial years.

**John Glen:**

Tax-Free Childcare began to be rolled out from April 2017.

Forecasted expenditure for financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 was published in the Office for Budget Responsibility's Economic and Fiscal Outlook for Spring Statement 2019 and can be found on page 105:

[https://obr.uk/docs/dlm\\_uploads/March-2019\\_EFO\\_Web-Accessible.pdf](https://obr.uk/docs/dlm_uploads/March-2019_EFO_Web-Accessible.pdf)

Actual expenditure for financial years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 was published in the Tax-Free Childcare Official Statistics, March 2022. The Tables and Statistics are available to download from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tax-free-childcare-statistics-march-2022>

Actual expenditure in 2020-21 was significantly lower than forecast. This is driven by the impact of COVID 19 lockdowns.

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[170766\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the cost to the public purse of increasing the tax free childcare scheme to cover (a) 25 per cent and (b) 30 per cent of childcare costs.

**John Glen:**

Up-to-date estimates are not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Should the Government announce any changes to Tax-Free Childcare or other policy measures in future, costings will be submitted to the Office for Budget Responsibility and published in the budget report on GOV.UK.

**Energy Bills Discount Scheme: Cleaning Services****Anne Marie Morris:****[170612]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons the laundry industry is not eligible for support under the Energy and Trade Intensive Industries scheme.

**James Cartlidge:**

We have taken a consistent approach to identifying the most energy and trade intensive sectors, with all sectors that meet agreed thresholds for energy and trade intensity eligible for Energy and Trade Intensive Industries (ETII) support under the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS). The firms eligible for ETIIs support are those operating within sectors that fall above the 80th percentile for energy intensity and 60th percentile for trade intensity, and those within sectors eligible for the existing Energy Intensive Industries compensations and exemption schemes. Further information on the methodology can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-bills-discount-scheme-factsheet/energy-bills-discount-scheme-energy-and-trade-intense-industries-assessment-methodology>.

All other eligible businesses, except for those experiencing low energy costs, will automatically receive a unit discount on their bills of up to £19.61/MW for electricity, and £6.97/MW for gas. This will help those locked into contracts signed before recent substantial falls in the wholesale price manage their costs and provide others with reassurance against the risk of prices rising again.

**Excise Duties****Preet Kaur Gill:****[169378]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to reform requirements to date (a) Vehicle Excise Duty and (b) other taxes from the first of the month.

**James Cartlidge:**

The Government has to balance simplicity and fairness when making decisions on the administration of taxes. The administration of different taxes will vary depending on the nature of the tax base.

It is a longstanding feature of the vehicle tax system that VED is issued from the first of a month. Issuing VED from a date other than the first of the month would add complexity to the vehicle tax system.

All taxes, including VED, are kept under review, and any changes are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

## ■ Fiscal Policy: Scotland

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[170745\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his planned timetable is for the next review of the agreement between the Scottish government and the UK government on the Scottish government's fiscal framework.

**John Glen:**

The UK Government and Scottish Government have had positive discussions on the timetable for the Fiscal Framework review, and I most recently visited Edinburgh in February 2023 where I met with the then Deputy First Minister.

We look forward to continuing these talks once the new First Minister has appointed their Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy.

## ■ Individual Savings Accounts

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

[\[172318\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2023 to Question 87713 on Individual Savings Accounts, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of abolishing the 25 per cent penalty on removing savings from Lifetime ISAs in the context of the affordability of housing for first time buyers where (a) the Lifetime ISA limit has remained at £450,000 and (b) house prices have increased 24 per cent between December 2016 and December 2021.

**Andrew Griffith:**

LISA funds, including any government bonus, can be withdrawn for the purchase of a first home valued under £450,000, in the case of terminal illness or from age 60.

Withdrawals for any other reason are subject to a 25% fee to recoup the government bonus and any interest or growth arising from it.

Data from the latest UK House Price Index demonstrates that the average price paid by first-time buyers is below the Lifetime ISA property price cap in all regions of the UK except for Inner London, where the average price paid is affected by Boroughs with very high property values. The Office for Budget Responsibility is also forecasting for house prices to fall by 9% by the end of 2024.

The Government keeps the operational aspects of the Lifetime ISA under review, as it does all aspects of the tax system, with any changes being announced at a fiscal event.

## ■ Invalid Vehicles: Imports

**Angus Brendan MacNeil:**

[\[169231\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the *Invamed Group and Others v. HMRC* judgment in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) on appeal from the Upper Tribunal Tax and Chancery Chambers Mr Justice Birss and Judge Roger Berner [2018] UKUT 305 (TCC) 2018 WL 04685885 of 25 February 2020, Neutral Citation Number:



[2020] EWCA Civ 243 / Case No: A3/2018/2938, for what reason his Department is applying import VAT on mobility scooters.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The chargeability of import VAT depends on the customs classification of a good. The correct classification for mobility scooters imported into the UK since August 2009 is under heading 8703, which is chargeable to import VAT. This did not change when the UK left the EU, with a specific legally binding Additional Chapter Note to clarify the UK legal position. The court case referred to is in respect of the classification of those goods imported between 2004 and 2007, during which time the court held that a different classification of 8713 was appropriate.

■ **Religious Buildings: Business Rates**

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[171473\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Valuation Office Agency's process for assessing non-traditional buildings which are places of worship.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[171474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Valuation Office Agency's requirements for signage in designating places of worship.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Schedule 5 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 sets out what conditions must be met for a religious building to be exempt from business rates. The main requirements are that the building should be a place of public religious worship which either belongs to the Church of England, the Church in Wales, or is certified as a place of religious worship by the General Register Office. It must also be used for the conduct of public religious worship.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) recognises that not all places of public religious worship will be in buildings that have traditionally been considered places of worship, such as purpose-built churches, temples, or chapels. The assessment of whether a property is used for the conduct of public religious worship is considered on a case-by-case basis, according to the facts. This includes consideration of any signage that is in place inviting public worship.

Should a ratepayer be unhappy with the VOA's assessment of their property, they can formally challenge the decision through the Check, Challenge, Appeal (CCA) process.

## ■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[170664\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to increase the number of social houses built, in addition to the Affordable Homes Programme.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[170665\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to support the building of more affordable housing.

**John Glen:**

The government is committed to delivering social and affordable housing and is investing £11.5 billion in the Affordable Homes Programme from 2021 to 2026. This is the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade and includes investment in supported housing, social and affordable rent and shared ownership. In addition to support local authorities to deliver council housing, in March 2021 the government announced a package of reforms to give councils more freedom in how they can spend the money they receive from Right to Buy sales on replacement homes; and at Spring Budget 2023 we announced a discounted Public Works Loan Board borrowing rate for Housing Revenue Accounts.

## ■ Spirits: Excise Duties

**Alan Brown:** [\[171465\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 21 March to Question 167167 on Spirits: Excise Duties and with reference to Table 4.1 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, if he will make an assessment of the Exchequer impacts of the August 2023 increase in duty in spirits for (a) 2023-24, (b) 2024-25, (c) 2025-26, (d) 2026-27 and (e) 2027-28.

**James Cartlidge:**

From 1 August 2023, the new alcohol duty system will not distinguish between alcohol categories, and there will not be a spirits duty. All alcohol between 8.5% and 22% ABV will pay a duty rate of £28.50 per litre of pure alcohol, and all alcohol above 22% will pay a duty rate of £31.64.

Exchequer impacts of this measure are set out in Table 4.1 of Spring Budget 2023 and have been certified by the Office for Budget Responsibility. More details can be found in the policy costings document published alongside Spring Budget 2023.

## ■ Tax Avoidance

**Luke Pollard:** [\[170731\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing an independent review of the loan charge.

**Victoria Atkins:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer that I gave on 16 March to the Hon Member for Portsmouth South, UIN [162282](#).

■ **Tax Avoidance: Mansfield****Ben Bradley:****[170709]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is planning to take to support individuals affected by the Loan Charge in Mansfield constituency.

**Victoria Atkins:**

HM Revenue and Customs is committed to, wherever possible, identifying taxpayers who need extra help and giving them the support they need.

HMRC can agree an affordable and sustainable instalment plan based on taxpayers' specific circumstances and for as long as they need. These Time to Pay arrangements are flexible and can be amended if the customer's circumstances change.

HMRC can also refer taxpayers for free debt advice that is independent from HMRC.

Taxpayers are supported by HMRC's trained advisers, including dedicated Extra Support Teams. Where appropriate, HMRC will signpost taxpayers to voluntary and community organisations. HMRC remains committed to strengthening the customer support it provides. For example, HMRC's Extra Support Teams and Samaritans are working together to deliver an 18-month project. This includes providing additional guidance to identify taxpayers who might be in vulnerable circumstances, and signposting them, where needed, to a dedicated Samaritans helpline for specialist emotional help they may need.

■ **Tax Yields: Scotland****Kenny MacAskill:****[170744]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has accrued to the Exchequer in (a) inheritance tax (b) capital gains tax (c) tax on dividends and (d) vehicle excise duty from people domiciled in Scotland in the 2021-22 financial year.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Estimates of revenue raised from Scotland in the 2021-22 financial year can be found in the Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) publication [Government Expenditure & Revenue Scotland 2021-22 \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

■ **Travel: Insurance****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[172480]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2023 to Question 162259 on Travel: Insurance, whether his Department has taken recent steps with (a) insurers and (b) the regulator to help increase access to (i) suitable and (ii) affordable insurance for all people.

**Andrew Griffith:**

Ensuring that everyone has access to suitable and affordable financial products and services is a priority for this Government. Last year, the Government published its Financial Inclusion Report 2021-22 which sets out the steps Government has taken to widen access to useful and affordable financial services for all, including insurance.

For example, in addition to the FCA signposting rules mentioned in my previous response, the Government has also worked with industry on wider issues around improving access to insurance, including other signposting initiatives. For instance, the Age Agreement, which we will review this year, offers support for older consumers struggling to access motor and travel insurance.

The FCA has also taken steps to ensure fairer outcomes for all motor and home insurance customers. As of 1 January 2022, insurers cannot charge renewing customers a higher price than they would pay if they were a new customer purchasing via the same channel.

**Treasury: Aviation****Emily Thornberry:**[\[169229\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 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 such flights were members of (a) the media and (b) business delegations included in the travelling party.

**James Cartlidge:**

The requested information is not centrally held and complying with this request would incur a disproportionate cost to the department.

**Treasury: Billing****Seema Malhotra:**[\[170621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the proportion of invoices his Department paid to small and medium-sized enterprises within five days in (a) the 2021-2022 financial year and (b) each of the last 12 months.

**James Cartlidge:**

All government departments publish payment performance quarterly showing the percentage of invoices paid in 5 days, the percentage of invoices paid in 30 days, and net debt interest liability.

This is available on GOV.UK. HM Treasury Group's published data is available at: [HM Treasury Group Payment Performance Publication Data.xlsx](#)

**Treasury: Consultants****Angela Rayner:**[\[172421\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department spent on external recruitment consultants in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) 2022.

**James Cartlidge:**

Consistent to answers given to written questions on 23 February 2023 and 17 May 2022, the information requested on external recruitment consultant expenditure is not available as we do not centrally hold data with this level of granularity on recruitment costs for the financial years in question.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Access to Work Programme****Andrew Jones:**[\[170576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress his Department has made on increasing processing times for access to work applications made by disabled people.

**Tom Pursglove:**

Access to Work have recruited more people and redeployed existing colleagues to support the processing of applications. We have also reviewed our processes and looked to streamline, where we can, to speed up decision making. Alongside that, we are continuing to transform the service through digitalisation and aim to introduce an online claims portal and an improved application process in the Spring. Whilst we still have a number of newer colleagues in training, these activities are showing positive results with an improvement in processing times and increases in clearances.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[171484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Access to Work applications resulted in recommendations which exceeded the annual cap in each of the last three years.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[171485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Access to Work applications for users of British Sign Language resulted in recommendations which exceeded the annual cap in each of the last three years.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The information requested is not readily available.

We do hold information on recommendations, but this is held as free text for each application and may not include cost estimates for each recommendation. Therefore, providing this information would incur disproportionate cost

**■ Chemicals: Regulation****Ruth Jones:**[\[169435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish her Department's Regulatory Management Options Analysis on the four substances it was considering for inclusion on UK's Substances of Very High Concern Candidate List; and if he will take

steps to review the new entries to the EU's Substances of Very High Concern Candidate List in (a) 2022 and (b) January 2023 for potential inclusion on the UK Candidate List.

**Mims Davies:**

All Regulatory Management Options Analyses (RMOAs) produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are published on HSE's website following agreement with the Appropriate Authorities. HSE will review new entries to the EU's SVHC candidate list as part of their work programme.

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[169439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Regulatory Management Options Analyses on potential substances for inclusion on the Substances of Very High Concern Candidate List does the Health and Safety Executive have the capacity to conduct per year.

**Mims Davies:**

The number of Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA) that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will progress each year depends on a number of factors. These include the information available to HSE on chemicals of concern, the likely impact of HSE's actions, wider strategic priorities within the REACH framework for risk management activity and available capacity. HSE plans to undertake 5 RMOAs during 2023/24.

■ **Earnings Rules**

**David Linden:**

[\[166323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.146 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, if he will publish the data which informed the policy decision to increase the Administrative Earnings Threshold to the equivalent of 18 hours at National Living Wage.

**David Linden:**

[\[166329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.146 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, if he will publish the data which informed the policy decision to remove the couples Administrative Earnings Threshold.

**Guy Opperman:**

Data is already in the public domain about the In-Work Progression Randomised Control Trial (RCT), which found that more intensive support delivered by Jobcentre Work Coaches helped claimants to increase their earnings. See link [Universal Credit: in-work progression randomised control trial - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universal-credit-in-work-progression-randomised-control-trial).

It demonstrated the importance of the relationship between the claimant and their Work Coach, with more regular engagement more likely to result in positive steps being taken to progress.

## ■ Employment: Disability

**Sir John Hayes:**

**[171350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to support disabled people to work.

**Tom Pursglove:**

A range of Government initiatives support disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay, and succeed in work.

These include:

- Increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work;
- The Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- Access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues disabled employees face in the workplace;
- The Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace; and
- Support in partnership between the DWP and the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Talking Therapies, which combines psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions.

To tackle rising economic inactivity due to long-term sickness, we announced a wide-reaching package at the Spring Budget to support disabled people and people with health conditions to work. New investment focuses on providing faster access to joined-up work and health support, including for mental health and musculoskeletal conditions, the two leading causes of economic inactivity due to long term sickness.

## ■ Habitual Residence Test

**Patrick Grady:**

**[169328]**

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 social security benefits to take account of peoples inability to travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[169330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if his Department will take steps to review social security benefit applications rejected on the basis of the past presence test, in the context of people's inability to travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The past presence test (PPT) is a qualifying condition for the DWP disability and carer benefits and ensures claimants have a substantial and recent connection to the UK.

There are a number of exemptions to the PPT which are clearly set out in secondary legislation. The PPT policy is kept under review and changes are made when appropriate, as shown by the amendments that have been made over the last few years in response to different situations; for example, introducing exemptions for refugees, those granted humanitarian status and for some people fleeing the conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Claimants who were abroad and could not return to Great Britain due to travel restrictions during the COVID-19 epidemic were advised that they could continue to be paid for as long as those restrictions remained in place. Once restrictions were lifted, allowing for travel back, then claimants were expected to do so if they wanted to continue to receive payment.

## ■ Industrial Accidents

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[R\] \[172447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department consulted (a) health and safety representatives and (b) trade unions on the decision made by Sodexo to change the default setting on the SOARS accident reporting system to one where staff have to opt in to send details of any accident to local health and safety representatives.

**Chris Stephens:**

[\[R\] \[172448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of reporting of accidents owing to changes in the default preferences under the SOARS reporting system; and what assessment he has made of the impact of those trends on the Department's compliance with Regulation 4(a) of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations in regard to safety representatives examining the causes of accidents in the workplace.

**Mims Davies:**

There have been no changes to the default preferences. The process remains that TUH&S representatives should receive a copy of all accident reports, these can be anonymised if the individual reporting requests it.



## ■ Jobcentres

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[169367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023, to Question 159058 on Social Security Benefits, whether claimants who are not expected to work have access to advice from Work Coaches in Job Centres.

**Guy Opperman:**

A full range of support is available to claimants, which includes work coach interviews, national and local provision. This support and advice is ongoing and can include, for example, employment support to help them find work, budgeting support, housing advice and signposting to local authorities to access to Discretionary Housing Payments.

People with health conditions and disabilities can access direct support from Disability Employment Advisors in Jobcentres. This is in addition to Additional Work Coach Support which will provide disabled people and people with health conditions with increased one-to-one personalised support. Additional Work Coach Support is already live in one third of jobcentres. It will be available in more jobcentres from spring 2023 and will be available nationally by 2024.

There are also multiple local jobs fairs, disability confident events and a wide variety event of training available.

## ■ Pensions

**Wes Streeting:**

[\[170677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the average amount a working person saved for their pension by the time they retired in 2022.

**Laura Trott:**

Individuals save in a variety of ways and draw on a range of assets with which to fund their retirement, including personal and workplace pensions. Therefore, we are unable to provide a single estimate.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Wera Hobhouse:**

[\[171508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to take steps to improve the application process for Personal Independence Payments.

**Tom Pursglove:**

The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application process is kept under continual review to ensure it meets the needs of claimants and helps the department reach an accurate assessment of an individual's entitlement. Since PIP was introduced, we have introduced a range of accessibility improvements such as the Video Relay Service and Relay UK, improved the clarity of the PIP2 questionnaire to make it easier to complete, expanded the assessment methods to include video and

telephone, and introduced recording by request for telephone and face-to-face appointments. Claimants are also kept informed and updated at each stage of the application process, including through our improved text message service.

Alongside this, the Health Transformation Programme is transforming the entire PIP service which will reduce the time it will take to process a claim and create a vastly improved claimant experience and a more efficient service for the taxpayer. We will introduce an option to apply for PIP online, giving claimants a greater choice in how they interact with the DWP and the ability to save, resume and upload medical evidence. We are currently operating a small-scale test of the new online apply service, taking a small number of claims to begin with before we gradually and carefully increase the number of people using the service. This approach allows us to develop, test and evaluate the service, exploring and making improvements as we gradually increase its availability. We are also exploring options to re-use evidence we currently hold, removing the need for claimants to upload or re-submit it, and we are reviewing what evidence is relevant to a decision, to enable more accurate data gather and decision making.

We published Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper on 15 March 2023 ( <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-support-the-health-and-disability-white-paper> ). The White Paper responds to feedback from The Health and Disability Green Paper consultation and sets out proposals to support more disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work, as well as to improve the overall experience of, and trust in, the benefits system. We will continue to work with disabled people, people with health conditions and their representatives, to reach the important goals set out in the White Paper.

## ■ Poverty: Children

**Tonia Antoniazzi:**

**[170683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to end child poverty.

**Mims Davies:**

The Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend around £276bn through the welfare system in Great Britain in 2023/24 including around £124bn on people of working age and children.

With 1.12 million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting individuals, including parents, to move into, and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children. The latest statistics show that in 2021/22 children living in workless households were around 5 times more likely to be in absolute poverty after housing costs than those where all adults work.

At the Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced an ambitious package of measures designed to support people to enter work, increase their working hours and extend

their working lives. The government's employment package will focus on supporting inactive individuals aged 50+, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, welfare claimants and parents. We are investing billions in additional childcare support for parents of toddlers, investing in wraparound childcare in schools, and increasing financial support for, and expectations of, parents claiming Universal Credit.

From April, we are uprating benefit rates and State Pensions by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap levels are also increasing by the same amount.

To further support those who are in work, including parents, from 1 April 2023, the National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour for workers aged 23 and over - the largest ever cash increase for the NLW.

For 2023/24, we have also announced further cost of living support. Households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to £900 in Cost of Living Payments. This will be split into three payments of around £300 each across the 2023/24 financial year. A separate £300 payment will be made to pensioner households on top of their Winter Fuel Payments and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment. Also, the government is maintaining the Energy Price Guarantee at £2,500 for a further three months, from April 2023.

## ■ Social Security Benefits

**Kate Osamor:**

**[169368]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023, to Question 159058 on Social Security Benefits, what advice his Department gives to people who are subject to the benefit cap but not expected to seek employment because their circumstances prevent them from working.

**Guy Opperman:**

All claimants without a specific work coach, for example, have access to support and advice on a voluntary basis. The full range of support is available to claimants, which includes work coach interviews, national and local provision. Work Coaches will ensure that claimants understand how moving into work, progressing in work and earning more will help them financially alongside advising them of the level of earnings they need to have in order to be exempt from the Benefit Cap.

The support and advice is ongoing and can also include, for example, employment support to help them find work, budgeting support, housing advice and signposting to local authorities to access to Discretionary Housing Payments.

Capped households are directed to further information and advice available on Gov.uk via the Universal Credit monthly statement.

There are also multiple local jobs fairs, disability confident events and a wide variety event of training available.

**Kate Osamor:**

**[169369]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023, to Question 159058 on Social Security Benefits, for what reason people who are not expected to seek employment because their circumstances prevent them from working are subject to the benefit cap.

**Guy Opperman:**

Households receiving severe disability benefits and/or entitled to carer benefits are exempt from the benefit cap.

**Kate Osamor:**

**[169371]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data his Department holds on the number of people who were subject to the benefit cap who increased their earnings through employment in each year since 2015.

**Guy Opperman:**

The latest statistics can be found at [Benefit cap statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-statistics)

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

**David Linden:**

**[166320]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.148 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, which parts of the sanctions process will be automated.

**Guy Opperman:**

There are no plans to automate either decision making or the application of the sanctions regime which will continue to be undertaken by Work Coaches and Decision Makers. However, we are automating the creation of the referral form for claimants who miss mandatory appointments. The referral form will then be reviewed by the Work Coach and submitted to the Decision Maker to take the ultimate decision, in the normal way.

**David Linden:**

**[166322]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.148 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, when work on design of the additional training programme commenced.

**Guy Opperman:**

There are no plans to automate either decision making or the application of the sanctions regime which will continue to be undertaken by Work Coaches and Decision Makers. However, we are automating the creation of the referral form for claimants who miss mandatory appointments. The referral form will then be reviewed by the Work Coach and submitted to the Decision Maker to take the ultimate decision, in the normal way.

The department is committed to the continuous upskilling of all Work Coaches to ensure a consistent application of sanctions policy and protection of claimants. As

with all changes to process that are undertaken, Work Coaches will be provided with guidance and support as required.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[169304]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 100 of the Spring Budget 2023, published on 15 March 2023, HC 1183, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the system to automate Universal Credit sanctions does not apply sanctions in error.

**Guy Opperman:**

There are no plans to automate either decision making or the application of the sanctions regime which will continue to be undertaken by Work Coaches and Decision Makers. However, we are automating the creation of the referral form for claimants who miss mandatory appointments. The referral form will then be reviewed by the Work Coach and submitted to the Decision Maker to take the ultimate decision, in the normal way.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**

**[169305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 100 of the Budget Report 2023, HC1183, published in March 2023, what his Department's training for Work Coaches on sanctions will entail.

**Guy Opperman:**

There are no plans to automate either decision making or the application of the sanctions regime which will continue to be undertaken by Work Coaches and Decision Makers. However, we are automating the creation of the referral form for claimants who miss mandatory appointments. The referral form will then be reviewed by the Work Coach and submitted to the Decision Maker to take the ultimate decision, in the normal way.

The department is committed to the continuous upskilling of all Work Coaches to ensure a consistent application of sanctions policy and protection of claimants. As with all changes to process that are undertaken, Work Coaches will be provided with guidance and support as required.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Reciprocal Arrangements

**Jim Shannon:**

**[170605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what pensions advice his Department provides to people who are under the age of 50 and are emigrating to nations without a reciprocal social security agreement; and if he will publish that advice.

**Laura Trott:**

Advice on the impact upon UK State Pension of emigrating to nations without a reciprocal social security agreement with the UK is already publicly available.

Information is provided on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) that the UK State Pension is not up-rated overseas except where there is a legal requirement to do so. 'Living in country guides' provide information on local pension systems and the provision of UK State

Pension up-rating in specific countries. These guides can be found here –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-living-in-guides>

Individuals under the age of 50 can also contact the Future Pension Centre for advice on how their pension might be affected if they emigrate abroad.

## ■ **State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad**

**David Linden:**

**[169387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many UK pensioners living overseas received a letter from his Department stating that their pensions had been stopped because of failing to return a completed life certificate form.

**Laura Trott:**

This information is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work & Pensions as the Department does not have a business requirement for this information to be retained.

**David Linden:**

**[169388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions were held with the (a) Canadian Government and (b) Canadian High Commission in the UK on UK pensioners in Canada who had their pensions stopped in 2022 because of problems with life certificate forms.

**Laura Trott:**

The Department for Work and Pensions confirmed in writing to the Canadian High Commission in London on 24 August 2022 that measures had been implemented to enable the clearing of life certificates by telephone and that pensioners who had been impacted were encouraged to contact the International Pension Centre. It was confirmed that suspended payments would be backdated and that the Department had extended the period in which Canadian customers could return life certificates because of issues with the Canadian Postal System.

## ■ **Training: Older People**

**Jim Shannon:**

**[169295]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps with his Cabinet colleagues to provide free courses to workers over 50 who feel they would benefit from training to (a) build their confidence and (b) ensure their skills are suited to the modern workplace.

**Guy Opperman:**

The UK Government already offer a wide range of skills focused programmes such as Sector-based Work Academies, Skills Bootcamps and Apprenticeships. As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, Free Courses for Jobs supports people of all ages find work or a new career.

At budget, the Chancellor announced returnerships, which is a new offer targeted at the over 50s, which will bring together the government's existing skills programmes, focusing on flexibility and previous experience to reduce training length.

Work Coaches and other Jobcentre Plus staff are equipped with knowledge about local labour markets and training opportunities, to support older people looking to move back into employment, and support such as Midlife MoT's and mentoring circles aim to build older customers confidence in their skills and ability to seek work.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[169366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2023 to Question 159052 on Social Security Benefits, for what reason the Universal Credit benefit cap is applied to claimants who are in work.

**Guy Opperman:**

One of the main aims of the benefit cap is to incentivise behaviours that encourage people into work and reduce long term dependency on benefits. Reflecting that aim there is an associated exception to the cap when a household has earnings of at least £658 a month (£722 from April 2023).

Getting our claimants back into work remains our primary concern and returning to employment will significantly increase the likelihood of a household not being affected by the cap.

## ■ Universal Credit: Children

**David Linden:**

[\[166330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 4.147 of the Spring Budget 2023, HC1183, published on 15 March 2023, whether an equality impact assessment of the proposed change to the work search requirements placed on Universal Credit claimants that are lead carers of children aged 1-12 has been carried out.

**Guy Opperman:**

We have carried out Equality Impact Assessments for the proposed changes to the requirements for lead carers of children aged 1 to 12 years.

## ■ Universal Credit: Disability

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[170723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper entitled Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper, published on 16 March 2023, if he will make it his policy to exempt people with (a) Parkinson's and (b) other progressive disabilities from increased Universal Credit conditionality.

**Tom Pursglove:**

We published Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper on 15th March 2023. This responds to feedback from The Health and Disability Green Paper consultation. These reforms will ensure that those who are able to can progress in, or towards, work, without the worry of being reassessed and losing their benefits.

We know that many disabled people want to work and could work with the right support; however, we recognise that, for many disabled people, and people with health conditions, work or work-related activity is not possible or appropriate and where this is the case, they will not be expected to participate in these activities to receive their benefit entitlement. We will also continue to work with disabled people, people with health conditions and their representatives as we develop this approach.



## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Correction to HLWS648

**Parliamentary Secretary (Alex Burghart):**

[\[HCWS681\]](#)

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

In order to take account of the Easter recess and the bank holiday for the celebration of the Coronation, the period of the consultation on the effectiveness of the Digital Economy Act 2017 Debt and Fraud Powers has been extended. It will now run until 11th May 2023.

Further to this change, the following text outlines the Government's approach, updating the approach outlined in the written statement that I made on 22 March 2023:

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

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

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

As part of this consultation, I shall engage with:

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

The Consultation is now open and will end on 11th May 2023.

## EDUCATION

### ■ FE Colleges Capital Update

**The Minister of State for Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon):** [\[HCWS677\]](#)

I am today announcing a further investment of £286 million of capital funding in condition improvement of the FE College estate. An allocation of £286 million will be provided in financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 to eligible FE colleges and designated institutions, as part of the FE Capital Transformation Programme which seeks to upgrade the FE college estate.

The allocation has been developed to prioritise and support FE colleges and designated institutions which have poor condition remaining, taking into account investment FE colleges have secured through previous rounds of the programme. This will allow these colleges to invest in the condition improvement priorities across their estates.

The allocation is part of the FE Capital Transformation Programme which delivers the government's £1.5 billion commitment to upgrade FE college estate in England, promoting parity of esteem between FE and other routes. Improving the condition of FE colleges is important in ensuring students have the opportunity to develop their skills in high quality buildings and facilities, in order to meet skills gaps in local economies.

Through the FE Capital Transformation Programme we have already agreed approximately £1.2 billion of investment in FE colleges and designated institutions. All colleges received a share of an initial £200 million allocation provided September 2020 to undertake immediate condition improvement works and at the same time providing a boost to the economy. We have awarded funding for 74 condition improvement projects through a competitive bidding round, with colleges now delivering these projects in their localities. DfE are working in partnership with a further 16 colleges to address some of the worst condition college sites in England.

This funding is part of the Government's investment of over £2.8 billion of capital investment in skills over this spending review period ensuring our skills system can deliver the skills that the economy needs.

This investment is a key part of our skills reforms, which is providing a ladder of opportunity that enables young people and adults to get **good jobs and progress in their careers**. This begins with the **opportunities and social justice** needed to access excellent education and skills training which lead to positive work outcomes.

Ultimately, we will help more people to achieve **secure, sustained, and well-paid employment** and provide opportunities for individuals to progress in their careers. This will help build the skilled workforce that businesses need, boost productivity and our economy, seize the opportunities of technological change and our net zero agenda, and level up across the country.

## ■ School System Update

**The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):**

**[[HCWS679](#)]**

Today my Noble Friend, The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for The School System and Student Finance (Baroness Barran) has made the following statement.

Today, 27 March, the Department for Education has published the [Academies Regulatory and Commissioning Review](#). The report sets out a framework for how we move forward with growing the academies system to ensure that we continue to nurture the power of highly effective leadership for the benefit of all children. The review sets out how we aim to grow the number of effective trusts so that we can continue to raise educational standards, create more opportunities and support for staff and build a more resilient education system. Together with the publication of the review, we are also publishing Trust Development Statements for each Education Investment Area (EIA) and to support the implementation of local priorities, the Trust Capacity Fund, worth £86 million in 2022-2025, will be open to new applications from 3 April. We are also confirming the allocations to Priority Education Investment Areas under the £42 million Local Needs Fund. Finally, we are publishing the content for a new MAT CEO leadership programme to help develop the pipeline of outstanding leaders required to lead a large trust effectively and support improvement in EIA and other areas of need across the country.

The academies programme has grown considerably since 2010, improving outcomes for children and unlocking the hard-earned expertise of teachers and school leaders. What started off as reforms designed to turn around a small number of the most challenging schools in England, has grown to the point where multi academy trusts (MATs) are now spreading excellence across every type of school, in every type of community. The review has considered the regulatory approach that the Department sets for trusts, the choices it makes about how the school landscape evolves, the support it provides to executive and non-executive trust leaders, and how it can best work with other actors in the system to ensure every pupil is receiving an excellent education.

The review sets out three key areas where the Department will work differently in future:

- We will implement a simple, proportionate regulatory approach, which focuses on the right risks and the right level of accountability.
- We will make better and more transparent commissioning decisions, informed by a clearer articulation of what it means to be a high-quality trust.
- We will offer support which spreads sector expertise and increases overall capacity to keep improving schools and build a truly resilient educational system through multi academy trusts.

We want to develop a dynamic, self-improving system with the expertise of trust leaders at the centre of our approach. The report also recognises the important role of trusts in supporting all children to achieve their potential, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and in alternative provision (AP), in line with the approach outlined in the [SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan](#) on Gov.UK.

The review is centred on delivering practical change, focusing in the near-term on policies and programmes that will enable and embed best practice across the school system, and in the medium term on strategic direction. The review has benefitted greatly from the input of our [Expert Advisory Group](#) and the views of a wide range of stakeholders. We will keep working with executive and non-executive trust leaders, teachers, dioceses and others to shape this approach and ensure the changes are implemented successfully. The full review conclusions can be found at [Academies regulatory and commissioning review - GOV.UK \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

The review report's findings will make a particularly strong impact in areas which face some of the biggest educational and social challenges. These have been identified as [Education Investment Areas \(EIA\)](#).

Today, for the first time, we have published [Trust Development](#) Statements. These statements set out our priorities in each EIA for developing a trust landscape led by high-quality trusts to transform standards locally and turn around underperforming schools.

To support the implementation of trust development statements, I am delighted to confirm that the [Trust Capacity Fund](#) 2023-25, worth £86 million in 2022-2025, will be open to new applications from 3 April. This two year fund will prioritise EIAs and will provide funding to support high-quality trusts, and high-quality schools forming new trusts, to take on underperforming schools.

Growing great trusts is central to our strategy to improve schools. To do that we also need to develop the pipeline of outstanding leaders. We are therefore publishing today the content of new training for our [MAT CEO development programme](#). This framework sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to lead a large trust effectively to ensure that every pupil is receiving an excellent education. The programme will help build leadership capacity to support improvement in EIAs and other areas of need across the country.

Finally, as set out in our Schools White Paper, we are investing an additional £42 million through the new [Local Needs Fund](#). Today we are confirming [allocations](#) to each of the 24 Priority EIAs (EIAs with high rates of disadvantaged pupils and very low educational outcomes at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4) to help them to access evidence-based programmes that will boost literacy and numeracy.

## ■ Schools Capital Update

**The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):**

**[[HCWS680](#)]**

Today my Noble Friend, The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for The School System and Student Finance (Baroness Barran) has made the following statement.

Today, I am announcing capital funding to support the creation of new school places and improve the condition of the school estate. This investment will support the Government's priority to ensure that every child has the opportunity of a place at a good school.

I am announcing £1.8 billion of capital funding for the 2023-24 financial year to improve school buildings. This will support local authorities, academy trusts and other bodies

responsible for school buildings, to ensure the estate is safe and well-maintained. This includes:

- £1.1 billion in School Condition Allocations (SCA) for local authorities, large multi-academy trusts and large voluntary-aided school bodies (such as dioceses) to invest in improving the condition of their schools.
- £0.5 billion for the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) programme. This is an annual bidding round for essential maintenance projects at schools in small and stand-alone academy trusts, small voluntary-aided bodies and sixth form colleges. Outcomes of the 2023-24 bidding round will be announced in due course.
- £0.2 billion of Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) funding allocated directly for schools to spend on their capital priorities.

This funding is part of the total £19.4 billion of capital funding announced at the 2021 Spending Review to support the education sector between 2022-23 and 2024-25.

I am also announcing £487 million for the 2025-26 financial year to fund local authorities to create school places needed for September 2026.

These funding allocations will allow local authorities and other responsible bodies to plan ahead with confidence, to invest strategically to ensure they deliver good school places for every child who needs one, and to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate to support effective education.

Full details have been published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Consultation on changes to Codes of Practice issued under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001

**The Minister of State for Security (Tom Tugendhat):** [\[HCWS682\]](#)

The Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) contains a comprehensive package of measures designed to make the recovery of unlawfully held assets more effective. The operation of certain powers within POCA are subject to guidance in various Codes of Practice issued by the Home Secretary, the Attorney General and the Advocate General for Northern Ireland, the Department of Justice Northern Ireland and Scottish Ministers.

Three existing Codes of Practice need to be updated and one new Code of Practice made, to reflect possible changes made to POCA by the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency (ECCT) Bill, which subject to being passed by Parliament and receiving Royal Assent will amend and insert new civil forfeiture powers into POCA, to increase the recovery of cryptoassets.

It is intended that the new civil forfeiture cryptoasset powers will be replicated in Schedule 1 to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (ATCSA) and Schedule 6 to the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT). The equivalent Code of Practice also needs to be updated.

POCA and TACT provide that before a Code of Practice is issued, I must consider any representations made, modify the Codes as appropriate, and subsequently lay the Codes before Parliament for approval.

I intend to consult on changes to the following Codes of Practice:

- Code of Practice issued under Section 47S of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Search, Seizure and Detention of Property (England and Wales)
- Code of Practice issued under Section 195S of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Search, Seizure and Detention of Property (Northern Ireland)
- Code of Practice issued under the proposed Section 303Z25 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (as inserted by Schedule 7 of the ECCT Bill) – Recovery of Cryptoassets and Related Items: Search Powers (NEW CODE)
- Code of Practice issued under Section 377 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Investigations
- Code of Practice for Officers acting under Schedule 1 to the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (amended through powers under Schedule 14 to TACT)

In tandem the Attorney General's Office will also launch a consultation on their equivalent Code of Practice.

I will arrange for a copy of the consultation document and the five draft codes to be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Following this consultation, I intend to lay a statutory instrument to issue these updated Codes of Practice under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) to reflect changes as a result of both the Economic Crime, Transparency and Enforcement Act, and the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### ■ Northern Ireland: Security Update

**Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chris Heaton-Harris):** [\[HCWS683\]](#)

The threat level to Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism is constantly monitored and is subject to a regular formal review. This is a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous process, based on the very latest intelligence and analysis of factors which drive the threat. The threat level review takes into account a range of factors and analysis of recent incidents.

The decision to change the threat level is taken by MI5, independently of Ministers.

MI5 has increased the threat to Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism from 'SUBSTANTIAL' (an attack is likely) to 'SEVERE' (an attack is highly likely).

The public should remain vigilant, but not be alarmed, and continue to report any concerns they have to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Over the last 25 years, Northern Ireland has transformed into a peaceful society. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement demonstrates how peaceful and democratic politics improve society. However, a small number of people remain determined to cause harm to our communities through acts of politically motivated violence.

In recent months, we have seen an increase in levels of activity relating to Northern Ireland Related Terrorism, which has targeted police officers serving their communities and also put at risk the lives of children and other members of the public. These attacks have no support, as demonstrated by the reaction to the abhorrent attempted murder of DCI Caldwell.

I pay tribute to the tremendous efforts of the Police Service of Northern Ireland and security partners, and the determination and resilience of the Northern Ireland people, who are making Northern Ireland a safer place to live and work. The political future of Northern Ireland rests with the democratic will of the people and not the violent actions of the few. Together we will ensure there is no return to the violence of the past.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Move to Universal Credit Update

**Minister of State for Employment (Guy Opperman):**

**[[HCWS678](#)]**

Since its introduction in 2013, Universal Credit has protected the most vulnerable in society, supported households through periods of financial uncertainty, helped people progress in work and move into better paid jobs. A dynamic benefit that reflects people's needs from month to month, Universal Credit successfully supports millions of people, and ensures that individuals are provided with the support they need to increase their earnings and move into better paid quality jobs.

In April 2022, the Government set out its plan to complete the move to Universal Credit, and published ' [Completing the move to Universal Credit](#) ', learning from the pilot that was paused in 2020.

In May 2022, we commenced our Discovery phase. Initially, we issued 500 Migration Notices to households in Bolton and Medway. This notification letter sets out the requirement to make a claim to Universal Credit, to continue to receive financial support from the Government. It advises that they have a minimum of three months to make their claim and provides details of the support available.

Following these initial notifications, we expanded the Discovery phase to Truro and Falmouth in July 2022, Harrow in August 2022, Northumberland in September 2022 and more recently all postcodes in Cornwall during February 2023.

In January 2023, we published our learning from the [Earliest Testable Service](#), which set out our initial learnings from the Discovery phase. It also set out the Department's plans for Move to Universal Credit in 2023/24 and 2024/25.



We are now preparing to increase the numbers of Migration Notices issued and will expand into additional areas, bringing in the whole of Great Britain during 2023/24. Social security is a transferred matter in Northern Ireland.

Through 2023/24, our focus will be on notifying households that receive tax credits only, increasing volumes incrementally each month. As we move into 2024/25, all cases with tax credits (including those on both Employment Support Allowance and tax credits), all cases on Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and all Housing Benefit cases (including combinations of these benefits) will be required to move to Universal Credit.

At the point of moving over to Universal Credit (for those claimants moving through the managed migration process), legacy benefit claimants will be assessed for transitional protection and paid where appropriate. The aim of this temporary payment is to maintain benefit entitlement at the point of transition so that claimants will have time to adjust to the new benefit system.

In line with the 2022 Autumn statement, the Government is delaying the managed migration of claimants on income-related Employment Support Allowance (except for those receiving Child Tax Credit) to Universal Credit. Employment Support Allowance claimants are still however able to make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe that they will be better off.

This Government remains committed to making this a smooth and safe transition. As we move to the next phase of Move to Universal Credit, we will continue to build on our learning to ensure the service continues to meet the needs of those required to make the move to Universal Credit.