



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 May 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:51 P.M., 23 May 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

■ Fraud: Prosecutions

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[185522\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many people have been prosecuted for fraud each year in the last five years for which data is available.

Michael Tomlinson:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not hold data showing the number of defendants prosecuted for offences of fraud.

The official statistics relating to crime and policing are maintained by the Home Office and the official statistics relating to sentencing, criminal court proceedings, offenders brought to justice, the courts and the judiciary are maintained by the Ministry of Justice.

BUSINESS AND TRADE

■ Construction: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[184470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent legislative steps she has taken to protect consumers from builders who charge for work never (a) completed and (b) begun.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 currently ensures consumers have strong protections against builders who charge for work that they do not complete.

The government has also introduced the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumer Bill this session. The legislation includes measures to introduce tougher court-based penalties for Trading Standards enforcement against rogue builders and others.

Details of the measures can be found in Part 3 [Enforcement of Consumer Protection Law] of the Bill.

■ Department for Business and Trade: EU Law

Andrew Rosindell: [\[184908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, which retained EU laws her Department has repealed in the last two years; and if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of repealing those laws on the international competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises based in the UK.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is committed to using our new regulatory autonomy to ensure that our regulations are tailored to the needs of the UK economy and businesses based in the UK.

The Government has introduced a new subsidy control regime to support British businesses and innovation through greater freedom to design subsidies which deliver both local and national objectives; reforms to EU competition block exemption regulations; and the Professional Qualifications Act which will revoke EU-derived rules on the recognition of professional qualifications in the UK.

An impact assessment for the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is available on gov.uk. Departments, including the Department for Business and Trade will assess, where required, the impacts of any further changes to EU laws that are made using the powers in the Bill including on small and medium-sized enterprises.

■ Digital Markets Taskforce**Sarah Olney:**[\[185688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether news publishers will be included in the types of third parties that firms designated as having Strategic Market Status by the Digital Markets Unit will be required to trade with on fair and reasonable grounds.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The pro-competition regime aims to address the far-reaching power of the biggest tech firms. It will help rebalance the relationship between major platforms and those who rely on them, including press publishers.

Once a firm is designated as having SMS, the DMU will be able to set tailored conduct requirements for how it must treat consumers and other businesses in relation to its designated digital activities; this could include requirements to trade on fair and reasonable terms.

Like all the DMU's tools, conduct requirements are sector-neutral in design and can be tailored to any kind of user relationship, including that with news publishers.

■ Small Businesses: Newport West**Ruth Jones:**[\[184729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent steps she has taken to help small businesses in Newport West constituency grow.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government provides extensive support to all types of businesses, through our Help to Grow Management, Business Support Helpline and 38 Growth Hubs.

Businesses in Newport West will have benefitted from the Government's reversal of the National Insurance rise, saving SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, the cut

to fuel duty, extended for a further 12 months and raising the Employment Allowance to £5,000.

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

The Government is providing financial support – since 2012, 168 SMEs in Newport West have received Start Up loans to the value of £1,710,240.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 10 Downing Street: Flags

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[184911\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the county flag of Middlesex will be flown from 10 Downing Street on Middlesex day; and whether he plans to fly the respective county flags from 10 Downing Street on county days.

Jeremy Quin:

I am happy to confirm to my Hon. Friend that the Middlesex Flag flew from 10 Downing Street on 16 May. This reflects the fact Downing Street is within the county of Middlesex, and Middlesex is its 'local' flag.

The Government is continuing to support the flying of all county flags within Westminster on the annual county flag week in Parliament Square.

■ Cabinet Office: Data Protection

John Healey:

[\[184782\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 May 2023 to Question 183317 on Capita: Cybercrime, what his Department's (a) policies on and (b) processes for informing (i) public sector employees and (ii) other individuals affected by a breach of Government data are.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office takes personal data breaches very seriously. As part of standard procedure, the Cabinet Office advises that all Cabinet Office employees must immediately report breaches to the Security Team and Data Protection Officer. Any breach that meets the legal tests set out in UK GDPR will be reported to the Information Commissioner or data subjects within the statutory deadlines.

It is our policy that data subjects will usually be notified of any incident pertaining to their personal data. Agreements with delivery partner(s) and 3rd party suppliers must stipulate the arrangements and obligations for ensuring that there is an established, effective and timely process to identify and report any actual or suspected losses of data/information by the 'provider'.

■ Disadvantaged

Jim Shannon:

[\[184974\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he is taking steps to develop a measure for social vulnerability as an indicator of (a) socio-economic resilience and (b) how risks impact across communities and vulnerable groups.

Jeremy Quin:

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

A response to the Hon Gentlemen's Parliamentary Question of 15 May is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Statistics Authority [PQ184974 (1).pdf]

■ Government Departments: Renewable Energy

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[185228\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what percentage of Government owned buildings have (a) solar panels and (b) wind turbines; and how many (i) solar panels and (ii) wind turbines were installed on Government buildings in each of the last 10 years.

Alex Burghart:

Data on the total number of solar panels and wind turbines across the government estate, and how they are distributed, is not held centrally. However, the government is committed to driving forward the renewable energy agenda, both on its own estate and beyond. As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, the government aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from public sector buildings by 75% by 2037. To support this, £2.5 billion is being invested through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme over the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25 to provide grants for public sector bodies in England to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures, including renewable electricity generation.

The Office of Government Property has published the Net Zero Estate Playbook providing guidance to support government property organisations to decarbonise their estate. This includes recommendations of how to reduce operational energy use, such as through improving renewable energy generation where appropriate through multiple channels.

■ Mining: Industrial Disputes

Grahame Morris:

[\[185568\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an estimate of the number of documents relating to the 1984-85 Miners Strike that have not been published.

Alex Burghart:

The Cabinet Office does not hold a register of retained documents. Collecting this data would require physical examination of many files and would exceed the cost threshold.

In accordance with the requirements of the Public Records Act 1958, most Cabinet Office records of the 1984-85 miners' strike have been transferred to The National Archives and are open to the public.

■ Teesworks: Domestic Visits

Darren Jones: [\[185060\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what dates which Ministers visited Teesworks since the 2019 General Election.

Alex Burghart:

The location of all Government Ministerial visits since 2019 is not centrally held.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Culture: Brexit

Jeff Smith: [\[182334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she has made an assessment of the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union on the income of UK cultural organisations.

Sir John Whittingdale:

HM Government recognises the great value of the UK's world-leading arts and cultural sectors. The Creative Industries continue to thrive and are a key high growth sector of the economy. The sector contributed £108 billion in 2021, accounting for 6% of UK GVA, and employed 2.3 million people – 7% of the total UK workforce – with employment growth increasing at almost five times the rate of the economy more widely since 2011.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund delivers on a commitment to match EU funding across all four nations of the UK and gives local communities control of how their money is spent, removing unnecessary bureaucracy and enabling them to invest in the cultural organisations that particularly matter to them.

Recently, the Department has also supported the cultural sector through unprecedented periods of financial instability and international border closures with the Culture Recovery Fund. As the published evaluation for the Fund shows, this £1.57 billion package of emergency cultural funding was delivered efficiently, helping support nearly 220,000 jobs and 5,000 organisations through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, the speed and highly targeted nature of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme had a direct impact on our ability to open up the economy and ease social restrictions more quickly than other comparable countries.

The Department is also taking a number of steps to reaffirm and deepen the longstanding relationships with our European partners — and, indeed, with countries in other continents across the globe — which will support UK cultural organisations to

maintain international connections and partnerships, and to forge new ones – for instance, supporting the British Council’s Seasons of Culture, via bilateral agreements with other governments, and through our membership of multilateral fora such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO. The Department also funds Arts Council England to support the sector to forge direct and deeper links at an institution-to-institution level. In all circumstances, we expect the UK’s creative output to continue to remain an export that is as highly valued in the European Union as it is across the world.

■ **Gambling: Regulation**

Matt Vickers:

[\[185168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of gambling regulation to protect people from the risk of gambling addiction.

Stuart Andrew:

We recognise that while millions of people gamble without experiencing problems, for some it becomes an addiction with serious consequences.

We recently published [a white paper following our Review of the Gambling Act 2005](#). The paper introduces a range of proportionate measures to tackle practices and products which can drive harm and ensure that people who are at risk of gambling harm and addiction are protected. These include new player protection checks, a stake limit for online slots games, improvements to consumer redress and a statutory levy on operators to fund research, education and treatment.

We will work with the Gambling Commission and other stakeholders to bring these measures into force as quickly as possible, and where further consultations are necessary, our aim is to publish them by summer 2023.

■ **Music: Artificial Intelligence**

Kevin Brennan:

[\[185506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with Cabinet colleagues on consulting with technology and music industry stakeholders on the design and implementation of a code of conduct for the use of artificial intelligence in the music industry.

Sir John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the enormous potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to deliver better public services, high quality jobs and opportunities, and enable future high growth industries. As set out in the recent AI white paper, our goal is to ensure that the UK becomes an AI superpower.

However, it is important that while we harness the benefits of AI, we also manage the risks. This includes particular risks to creative sectors and rights holders, notably the music industry.

As set out in the Government response to the Pro-innovation Regulation of Digital Technologies Review, we are working with users and rights holders to develop a code of practice on text and data mining, a process used in the development and training of AI models. To inform the code of practice, the Government is convening a group of AI firms and rights holders, in the music industry and other parts of the creative sector, to identify barriers faced by users of data mining techniques when accessing copyright materials, and to develop licensing solutions for these.

The Chancellor hosted a Creative Industries conference on 3 May alongside the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology; and the Secretary of State for Education, to discuss with 80 industry representatives the key challenges and opportunities facing the Creative Industries, including the impact of the use of AI in the music industry. We will continue to engage and work closely with industry on the design and implementation of future reforms.

■ Sports

Conor McGinn:

[\[185822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department is providing support for the promotion and playing of (a) Gaelic football, (b) hurling and (c) camogie in England.

Stuart Andrew:

Supporting grassroots sport is a key government priority. Last year, Sport England received almost £350 million from the Government and National Lottery to fund grassroots sports projects so that everyone, regardless of background, is able to access and benefit from quality sport and physical activity opportunities.

Since 2001, Sport England has invested:

1. £95,760 in gaelic football with a further £1,550,240 through multi-sport funding investment;
2. £10,748 in hurling through multi-sport funding investment;
3. £46,407 in camogie through multi-sport investment.

■ VisitBritain: Japan

Navendu Mishra:

[\[185458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many VisitBritain staff are based in Japan.

Sir John Whittingdale:

There is one VisitBritain staff member based in Japan. They are located in the British Embassy in Tokyo.

■ VisitBritain: South Korea

Navendu Mishra: [\[185457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many VisitBritain staff are based in the Republic of Korea.

Sir John Whittingdale:

There is one VisitBritain staff member based in the Republic of Korea. They are located in the British Embassy in Seoul.

DEFENCE**■ A400M Aircraft**

Dan Jarvis: [\[185784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the functionality of the Atlas A400M fleet in meeting the operational requirements of all Armed Forces services.

James Cartlidge:

As with all Defence capabilities, we routinely review their ability to meet our requirements to ensure we have the right capabilities to meet our current and future needs in a rapidly changing and volatile world.

Dan Jarvis: [\[185785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate he has made of the (a) cost of and (b) timeframe for adapting the Atlas A400M fleet to meet the full functionality of the C-130J fleet.

Dan Jarvis: [\[185849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a list of the functionality gaps recently identified between the Atlas A400M fleet and the C-130J fleet.

James Cartlidge:

The Atlas A400M is a versatile, modern and capable aircraft with a longer range and bigger capacity than the Hercules C-130J, offering the opportunity to approach those tasks carried out by the Hercules C-130J in a different manner, so will not simply replicate how the Hercules C130J currently delivers its mission set.

Dan Jarvis: [\[185786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to review the performance of the Atlas A400M fleet in the light of recent evacuation operations in Sudan.

James Cartlidge:

The RAF keeps the performance of all its aircraft under constant analysis in order to improve operational performance. The Atlas A400M was heavily involved in the evacuation operations in Sudan and fully met all requirements.

■ A400M Aircraft and Hercules Aircraft**John Healey:** [\[185494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the differences are in the (a) capabilities and (b) functions between the (i) Hercules C130 and (ii) Atlas A400M.

James Cartlidge:

Both the Hercules and Atlas A400M are designed to undertake inter- and intra-theatre airlift carrying passengers and/or freight, as well as aerial delivery of personnel and equipment by parachute to the point of need. Both aircraft are able to be refuelled when airborne, extending their endurance and providing global reach. They can also both operate from austere and natural surface landing zones.

However, the Atlas A400M is the next generation of air mobility aircraft, offering the opportunity to approach those tasks previously carried out by the Hercules C-130J in a different manner. The main difference between the two aircraft is the increased speed, range and payload of Atlas. As a comparison, Atlas can carry a comparable number of troops, but has a freight payload over twice that of Hercules. In terms of representative loads, Atlas carries twice as much as Hercules, one and a half times greater distance, at a speed over 25% faster than Hercules.

John Healey: [\[185495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what are the annual running costs for (a) Hercules C130 and (b) Atlas A400M.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer my predecessor gave on 25 November 2022 to Question 90738.

Attachments:

1. Military Aircraft: Costs [90738 - Military Aircraft Costs.docx]

■ Clyde Naval Base and RNAD Coulport: Radiation Exposure**Neale Hanvey:** [\[185424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any radiation breaches below the serious radiation breach threshold have taken place at (a) HM Naval Base Clyde and (b) RNAD Coulport.

James Cartlidge:

There have been historical events with minor radiological consequences at both His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde and the Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD) Coulport. These events have not resulted in significant radiation exposure or impact on the environment. All events are thoroughly investigated and, if required, notified to external regulators.

Further details regarding incidents at HMNB Clyde and RNAD Coulport can be found in the answer given to Question 180428.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[185427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the process is for recording radiation breaches that occur at (a) HM Naval Base Clyde and (b) RNAD Coulport; and what the process is for communicating that information to (a) local services and (b) the public.

James Cartlidge:

In line with regulations and Industry Good Practice and in common with other defence and civil nuclear sites, His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde, including RNAD Coulport, has a well-established system for raising Nuclear Site Event Reports. These reports are raised to foster a robust safety culture that learns from experience.

HMNB Clyde also undertakes regular engagement with the local community to test established processes for communicating information to the public, including emergency services.

■ **Frigates: Guided Weapons**

Luke Pollard:

[\[185715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what are the planned missiles systems that will be used in the Mk41 vertical launch system on Type 26 and Type 31 frigates.

James Cartlidge:

The Royal Navy is still developing its plans for the types of missiles both classes of ships will carry. The design of the Mk41 vertical launch system is such that each ship in each class will be able to carry the optimum mix of missiles for the role it undertakes.

■ **Guided Weapons**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[185776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to fund research and development for the purposes of protecting the UK against current and future ballistic and hypersonic missile threats.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to fund research and development (R&D) to protect the UK from a variety of threats. Missile defence R&D is delivered by the UK Missile Defence Centre (MDC) which is a government-industry partnership led by the MOD. The MDC funds research to underpin capability development and sustain critical capabilities, integrating relevant research and technologies from across MOD's Science & Technology portfolio. The research programme covers existing and future ballistic threats as well as evolving hypersonic threats.

The MOD works closely with NATO and International Partners across a range of related R&D areas. The UK is committed to co-operation with the United States and Australia on counter-hypersonics through the AUKUS partnership.

■ Military Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[185771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, in what way his Department measures the reliability of aircraft in the Royal Air Force's Forward Operating Fleet; and what data his Department holds on the reliability of the (a) A400M and (b) C130J in the Forward Operating Fleet as of the end of each of the last 12 months.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[185772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many A400M and C130J aircraft were available in the Forward Operating Fleet at the end of each of the last 12 months.

James Cartlidge:

The key metric for the RAF is the availability of aircraft which is the primary indicator of its ability to meet Defence requirements, whereas reliability measurement is focused on individual component parts.

Figures for the number of Atlas A400M and Hercules C-130J aircraft in the Forward Available Fleet at the end of each of the last 12 months are given in the table below.

MONTH	ATLAS A400M	HERCULES C-130J
May 2022	14	10
June 2022	13	10
July 2022	13	8
August 2022	15	9
September 2022	14	9
October 2022	13	9
November 2022	15	9
December 2022	15	10
January 2023	13	9
February 2023	16	9
March 2023	13	7
April 2023	13	7

■ Military Bases

John Healey: [\[185755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May to Question 184576 on Military Bases: City of York, if he will list all military sites broke down by each UK Authority.

James Cartlidge:

The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Navy: Military Bases

Neale Hanvey: [\[185425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the threshold is for recording a serious radiation breach at naval bases; and which organisations are responsible for assessing what constitutes a (a) serious and (b) non-serious radiation breach.

Neale Hanvey: [\[185426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what operational definition his Department uses to determine what constitutes a (a) serious and (b) non-serious radiation breach.

James Cartlidge:

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for the assessment and categorisation of radiological safety events. The categorisation of events at HM Naval Base Clyde is aligned to the guidance issued by the Office for Nuclear Regulation. The radiological consequences of an event would be considered serious if it resulted in an unplanned radiation exposure exceeding a statutory dose limit or a release of radioactive material which exceeds the notification value in the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017.

■ RNAD Coulport

Neale Hanvey: [\[185422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when staff at building 201 at Royal Navy Armament Depot Coulport were first informed that they were being relocated to building 41; how many days notice those staff were given of that re-location; and what the date was of the official communication sent to staff.

James Cartlidge:

Staff in building 201 were actively involved in preparing the building for handover to Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) over a number of months. Building management kept staff informed of the works programme throughout, including the date that the building was being handed over to the DIO contractor. These updates included a weekly building visit to the staff by the Resident Director.

There is no policy requirement for official communication to relocate staff from one building to another, however, it is conducted as best practice.

Neale Hanvey: [\[185423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there was a public announcement of the re-location of staff from building 201 at Royal Navy Armament Depot Coulport to building 41 in 2022.

James Cartlidge:

No, there was no requirement for a public announcement of the re-location of staff from one building to another. This evolution was managed internally by site management in line with standard practice.

■ **Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance**

John Healey: [\[184884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department covered the cost of the Power Improvement Project.

James Cartlidge:

Yes, the Ministry of Defence is funding the Type 45 Power Improvement Project.

EDUCATION

■ **Apprentices: Bexleyheath and Crayford**

Sir David Evennett: [\[185529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of people beginning apprenticeships in Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency in each year since 2010.

Robert Halfon:

Apprenticeship starts for Bexleyheath and Crayford from the 2010/11 to 2021/22 academic years are shown in the table below:

ACADEMIC YEAR	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS
2010/11	630
2011/12	740
2012/13	790
2013/14	640
2014/15	700
2015/16	730
2016/17	690
2017/18	620

ACADEMIC YEAR	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS
2018/19	710
2019/20	560
2020/21	580
2021/22	590
2022/23 Aug to Jan	300
Total since May 2010	8,350

Notes:

- (1) Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
- (2) Data source is the Individualised Learner Record.
- (3) Location is based upon the home postcode of the learner.
- (4) Starts are the count of apprenticeships started at any point during the stated academic period. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.

Further information on apprenticeship starts can be found in the apprenticeships and traineeships statistics publication, which can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>.

■ Childcare: Fees and Charges

Alex Sobel:

[185649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department has any plans to extend the 30 hours free childcare entitlement to include families where one parent is retired and one works full time.

Claire Coutinho:

The 30 hours free childcare entitlement aims to support working families with the cost of childcare and to support parents back into work or to work more hours should they wish to.

This offer is available to parents who earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the national minimum/living wage, and under £100,000 adjusted net income per year. This means that parents can be eligible if they earn from just over £167 per week or £8,670 per year. In a two-parent family, both parents must expect to meet this income criteria to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare.

The entitlement aims to support parents back into work and in order to be eligible both parents must be in work. The department is currently not planning to extend this to families where one parent is retired and the other works full-time.

All parents are eligible for 15 hours of free early education, which is available to all three- and four-year olds regardless of family circumstances.

■ Children in Care: Restraint Techniques

Steve McCabe:

[185208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the handcuffing of children in care during secure transportation occurs.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is clear that restraint, which includes the use of handcuffs, in relation to looked-after children is only permissible in a very narrow range of circumstances, and must always be necessary and proportionate. The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and supporting statutory guidance clearly sets out the law regarding the use of restraint where children are placed in children's homes, including in secure children's homes. This guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-regulations-including-quality-standards-guide>.

Restraint is only permitted in certain instances, in order to prevent injury to any person including the child, to prevent serious damage to the property of any person including the child, or to prevent a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home.

Homes are required to record any incidents of restraint under Regulation 35. There is also a requirement under Regulation 40 for the Registered Person to inform Ofsted of any incident in relation to a child that they consider to be serious, which would usually include an incident of restraint. The department does not routinely collect data on the use of restraint.

In 2019, the government published guidance on reducing the need for restraint for those responsible for providing education, health, and social care to children and young people under 18 years of age with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties in these settings. This can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812435/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention.pdf.

Where local authorities have contract arrangements with transport services, restraint should only be used in very limited circumstances, in accordance with the guidance on the use of restraint and must always be necessary and proportionate. The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 will be reviewed as part of the government's response to the Care Review recommendations, Stable Homes, Built on Love. In this, we have committed to review care standards, and will not hesitate to revisit guidance on the use of restraint and strengthen the law in this area, if we find this is necessary.

■ Defibrillators and First Aid: Training

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[185153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to improve the automated external defibrillator training in first aid training to include (a) how to (a) identify a sudden cardiac arrest and (b) administer a defibrillator safely and successfully.

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[185154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Ofsted checks are in place to monitor the efficacy of teachers educating CPR and first-aid in schools.

Nick Gibb:

All state funded schools in England are required to teach first aid as part of statutory health education which includes basic first aid. Pupils in secondary schools are taught further first aid; for example, how to administer CPR and the purpose of defibrillators. Schools may also incorporate further defibrillator awareness and training materials to support this as part of the wider curriculum.

In 2022, the Department announced it would provide automated external defibrillators to schools in England to plug local gaps and provide more schools and local communities access to first-aid equipment.

On 20 January 2023, the Department announced that the first deliveries of defibrillators had taken place. More information on the announcement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defibrillator-deliveries-begin-for-all-schools-that-need-one>. Since this announcement, as part of the ongoing rollout, the Department has delivered over 6,900 defibrillators to state funded schools.

The Department is reviewing the statutory guidance which will cover the full scope of the statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance and the Department will gather evidence from a wide range of stakeholders. The Department will consult publicly on an amended draft in the autumn, to conclude by the end of the year. The amended guidance will be published soon after in early 2024.

As part of the Ofsted assessment of a school's support for pupils' personal development, inspectors make a professional judgement on whether the school is providing appropriate and effective teaching in the range of curriculum subjects, including RSHE. Schools are accountable for what they teach and should ensure that all RSHE content is factual, age appropriate and suitable for their pupils. As part of their personal development judgement, inspectors would discuss with schools whether they teach RSHE content in line with the RSHE statutory guidance.

■ National Curriculum Tests

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[184947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions (a) she and (b) officials in her Department had with Ofqual in advance of the 2023 Standard Assessment Tests.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[184948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she sought assurances from Ofqual that the selection of texts for Standard Assessment Tests for 2023 are of an appropriate standard.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[184949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions (a) she and (b) officials in her Department are having with (i) Ofqual and (ii) exam boards following the 2023 Standard Assessment Tests.

Nick Gibb:

The Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is an executive agency of the Department with responsibility for the development and delivery of National Curriculum tests and assessments. Ofqual regulate all National Curriculum assessments, which includes observing STA's processes.

Key Stage 2 assessments are an important way of identifying pupils' strengths and where they may have fallen behind as they head to secondary school. The STA independently develop these tests with questions rigorously trialled with Year 6 pupils and reviewed by education and inclusion experts to ensure appropriateness. Ministers have no involvement in test development or in the selection of the content of the test. Ministers do not have access to the test materials until they are published after the end of the timetable variation window, which is five school days after the scheduled test date. Ministers likewise have no involvement in the standards maintenance process which determines the threshold for the expected standard each year.

STA develops tests in line with the expectations in Ofqual's regulatory framework for national assessments. Ofqual representatives observe key meetings and processes throughout the three year test development process. Following the conclusion of the test cycle for 2023, Ofqual will publish an annual report on National Curriculum assessment regulation activity. This will, among other areas, set out their view of the test development process for this year.

STA will continue to hold regular meetings with Ofqual to discuss the national assessments, and will continue to work with schools, pupils and parents to understand the views on this year's papers.

Exam boards have no responsibility for National Curriculum assessments.

Mike Amesbury: [\[185106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of SATs test design.

Nick Gibb:

End of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessments, also known as Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), assess the National Curriculum published in 2014. When

the new curriculum was published, the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) developed test frameworks setting out the format, structure and content of the tests.

The frameworks were developed in conjunction with teachers, education and curriculum experts. Test materials are reviewed against this framework and trialled comprehensively in schools with Year 6 pupils to ensure they are appropriate. There are no plans to review the specifications for the tests.

STA works independently on the test materials. Ministers have no involvement in test development or in the selection of the content of the test. Ministers do not have access to the test materials until they are published after the end of the timetable variation window, which is five school days after the scheduled test date. Ministers likewise have no involvement in the standards maintenance process which determines the threshold for the expected standard each year.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Janet Daby: [\[185112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of including a list of student groups with disproportionately high exclusion rates in her Department's statutory exclusion guidance.

Janet Daby: [\[185113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to tackle potential disparities in school exclusions among (a) different racial groups and (b) people with multiple protected characteristics.

Janet Daby: [\[185117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential benefits of providing specialist support to children identified as at risk of exclusion.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to providing world class education, training, and care for everyone whatever their background, and to taking the action needed to address disparities.

Head teachers use suspensions and permanent exclusions when required, as part of creating calm, safe and supportive classrooms that bring out the best in every pupil. Schools should only use permanent exclusion as a last resort. The Department supports teachers in taking proportionate and measured steps to ensure good behaviour in schools.

The Department is aware that some groups of children have a greater likelihood of suspension and permanent exclusion than others, although local context means there will be different patterns across the country. The updated 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusion' guidance sets out that schools, local authorities, and local partners should work together to understand what lies behind local trends. This guidance is available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101498/Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools academies and pupil referral units in England including pupil movement.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101498/Suspension_and_Permanent_Exclusion_from_maintained_schools_academies_and_pupil_referral_units_in_England_including_pupil_movement.pdf).

The Department's 'Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees' makes clear that governing boards should carefully consider the level and characteristics of pupils who are leaving the school and challenge the school and academy trust management teams on any permanent exclusions to ensure it is only used as a last resort. This includes looking at suspensions, pupils taken off roll, those directed to be educated off site in Alternative Provision (AP), and whether there are any patterns to the reasons or timing of such moves.

Schools also have a clear duty not to discriminate against pupils based on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Ofsted's assessment of behaviour in schools includes specific consideration of rates, patterns, and reasons for exclusions, as well as any differences between groups of pupils.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and AP Implementation Plan, published on 2 March 2023, sets out a new national vision and delivery model for the AP system. As needs will be identified and supported early, this should reduce the numbers of preventable exclusions and expensive long term placements, and lead to improvements in pupils' wellbeing and outcomes.

Janet Daby: [\[185114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to improve (a) monitoring and (b) oversight of school exclusion rates.

Janet Daby: [\[185115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to increase protections for victims of child criminal exploitation who are excluded from school.

Nick Gibb:

The Department collects data on suspensions and permanent exclusions from all state funded schools through the termly School Census. Schools must provide information on the type and reason for the exclusion for the previous two terms.

Prior to the 2021/22 academic year, data was published on an annual basis covering the whole academic year. Since November 2022 the Department has published the data on a termly basis.

This fulfils the Department's commitment to the 2021 report 'Strengthening Home Education', where the Education Select Committee suggested that only having an annual statistical release on exclusions may prevent the identification of illegal exclusion practices.

To further improve the monitoring and oversight of school exclusions, the Department has taken further action by capturing the information directly from schools as part of

the Daily Attendance Data Collection. This collects daily attendance data on schools' management information systems. Data is published fortnightly at Local Authority, regional and national level, allowing for more real time data on the use of the attendance code for exclusions (Code E).

To ensure Local Authorities receive real time data on all suspensions regardless of length, the Department took action through the School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 requiring all schools since September 2022 to share suspension data with Local Authorities 'without delay', to assist Local Authorities and safeguarding agencies to successfully support the most vulnerable pupils.

The Department is investing over £50 million to fund specialist support in mainstream and Alternative Provision schools in the areas where serious violence most impacts pupils.

Janet Daby:

[\[185118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made a recent assessment of the potential impact of diversity in schools' senior leadership teams on exclusion rates.

Nick Gibb:

The Department agrees with the findings of the Timpson Review of School exclusion, in that it must back head teachers to create strong school cultures that deliver the best outcomes for every pupil. It is important to consider the diversity of senior leadership teams to ensure there are positive role models for all pupils in every school.

The Department monitors data on the teaching workforce, including statistics on the diversity of teachers and senior leadership teams.

The Department wants to see more diversity, so that teachers and leadership teams are representative of the communities they serve and the pupils they teach. If the Department is to recruit and retain the best possible candidates, the full potential of the teaching and leadership talent pool should be recognised and realised.

The Department's world class teacher development programmes, such as National Professional Qualifications, are designed to support all teachers in the early stages of their careers right the way through to executive headship. These programmes are supported by unprecedented levels of investment to ensure they reach as many people as possible and facilitate the recruitment, retention and promotion of the best teachers and senior leadership teams, regardless of their background.

Through the suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), current and aspiring leaders can develop the knowledge, behaviours, and networks they need to be high performing leaders at a variety of levels and deliver the best possible outcomes for the staff and children in their diverse communities. There are four leadership NPQs currently available: Senior Leadership, Headship, Executive Leadership, and Early Years Leadership.

■ Pupil Exclusions: Appeals

Janet Daby: [\[185119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to allow school exclusion decisions to be appealed to first-tier tribunals in cases where racial discrimination is alleged.

Nick Gibb:

The Government condemns and strives to tackle all forms of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools have a duty to take steps to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across all protected characteristics, including between people of different ethnic backgrounds. The Department has published advice to support schools to fulfil their duties under the Equality Act 2010, which can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf.

■ Schools: Managers

Janet Daby: [\[185116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to increase diversity in senior leadership teams in schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department actively monitors diversity data, including leadership data, through published reports such as: 'School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends (April 2022)', available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-leadership-in-england-2010-to-2020-characteristics-and-trends>. It is also monitored through 'Working lives of

teachers and leaders – wave 1 (April 2023)', available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-1>.

Results show improvements over time in representation of some groups in leadership. However, some groups remain underrepresented in the teaching workforce and at leadership level.

The Department's world class teacher development programmes, such as National Professional Qualifications, are designed to support all teachers through to executive headship and to reach as many people as possible, regardless of their background.

Governors have an important role to play in promoting diversity, equality and inclusion when appointing school leaders and guidance from the Department makes this clear.

School governance boards are expected to have an understanding of, and an adherence to, the Equalities Act 2010, promoting equality and diversity throughout the organisation, including in relation to its own operation. They should understand

the full diversity of the cultural context of the school and community they serve as set out in the Governance Handbook and in the current guidance on recruiting a headteacher, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recruiting-a-headteacher>.

High quality trusts should ensure inclusive working environments, support flexible working, and take action to promote equality and diversity for the teaching workforce as recommended in the published descriptions of trust quality, which can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1152301/Trust_Quality_Descriptions.pdf.

The Government has also issued new guidance to assist employers with applying positive action in the workplace. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-action-in-the-workplace-guidance-for-employers>.

■ Sign Language: Education

Derek Thomas:

[185797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the accessibility of British Sign Language classes for parents of (a) deaf children and (b) children with hearing loss who are (i) over the age of 23, (ii) not on a low income, (iii) not unemployed and (iv) ineligible for grants under the adult education budget.

Robert Halfon:

The government has not assessed the accessibility of British Sign Language (BSL) classes for those who are ineligible for the Adult Education Budget (AEB).

The AEB targets a wide range of individuals, including, but not limited to, UK nationals, other non-UK nationals, certain EU nationals and their family members, and individuals with certain types of immigration status (such as refugee status and those with indefinite leave to remain) and some asylum seekers. In areas where the AEB is devolved, it is for the Mayoral Combined Authority or Greater London Authority to decide how funding is spent. In the rest of the country, which includes the St Ives Constituency, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) manages the AEB. Learners who are employed and earn above the low wage threshold can be co-funded to complete provision up to and including level 2, which includes some BSL qualifications, meaning that the government pays a 50% contribution to the course cost.

Apart from the statutory entitlements, it is for AEB providers to choose how they wish to prioritise funding within their AEB allocations. For these learners, the department suggests contacting the education provider regarding enrolment and payment processes.

■ Space: Education

Damien Moore:

[\[185310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to encourage students in (a) schools and (b) universities to study subjects that could lead to careers in the commercial space sector.

Robert Halfon:

Science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) skills are in demand by employers across the country, and demand is growing. The department is investing in STEM education at all levels to ensure people have access to high-quality STEM teaching and can access STEM career opportunities within sectors such as the space sector.

The department is investing to recruit and retain high-quality teachers of STEM related subjects in schools and further education . Since autumn 2022, early career teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry, or computing, who work in disadvantaged, state-funded secondary schools have been able to claim a Levelling Up Premium of up to £3,000 tax free per year, for up to three years. We also fund a suite of training and professional development offers to support high-quality STEM teaching.

The department is boosting the take-up of STEM subjects by delivering my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's ambition of ensuring all students in England study maths to 18. We are also funding tailored maths support for students and teachers through the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, investing £84 million into the National Centre for Computing Education to drive increased participation in computer science, and funding research programmes on how to tackle gender balance in STEM subjects.

The government also supports programmes such as STEM Ambassadors, which inspires young people from under-served backgrounds to engage with STEM subjects.

The department is investing an additional £750 million over the three-year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to support high-quality teaching and facilities in higher education, including in science and engineering, subjects that support the NHS, and degree apprenticeships. Degree apprenticeships offer people of all backgrounds a unique opportunity to combine degree-level study with being in a job and earning from day one.

■ Special Educational Needs

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[185725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Claire Coutinho:

On 2 March 2023, the department published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan in response to the Green Paper. This outlines our approach to creating a sustainable system that is better for children with SEND and easier for their families to navigate.

The department will establish a single national system that delivers for every child and young person with SEND, so that they enjoy their childhood, achieve good outcomes, and are well prepared for adulthood and employment. We will also give families greater confidence that their child will be able to fulfil their potential through improved mainstream provision in their local setting.

For those children and young people with SEND who do require an Education Health Care (EHC) plans and specialist provision, the department will ensure they get prompt access to the support they need, and that parents do not face an adversarial system to secure this. We will strengthen accountability across the system so that everyone is held to account for supporting children and young people with SEND.

The department will test the key reforms by creating up to nine Regional Expert Partnerships through our £70 million Change Programme. Oversight of reform will be driven by a new national SEND and AP Implementation Board, jointly chaired by myself and my hon. Friend, the Minister for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy.

The department recognises that these reforms will take time to implement and continue to support the system in the immediate term to support children with SEND, which is why we are investing £2.6 billion between now and 2025 to fund new SEND and AP places and improve existing provision.

High needs revenue funding for children and young people with complex needs will be rising to £10.1 billion in this financial year 2023/24, which is an increase of over 50% from the 2019/20 allocations. This extra funding will help local authorities and schools with the increasing costs of supporting children and young people with SEND.

■ Teachers: Enfield**Feryal Clark:**[\[185160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of Outer London pay scales on (a) recruitment and (b) retention of teachers in (i) Enfield North constituency and (ii) the London Borough of Enfield.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is concentrating funding in the teaching profession with school funding in 2024/25 due to reach its highest level in history per pupil and in real terms, as measured by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The Department implemented in full the School Teachers' Review Body's (STRB) recommendations for the 2022/23 academic year of an 8.9% pay rise for early career

teachers outside London, and a 5% pay rise for experienced teachers. This is the highest pay award in 30 years.

This uplift raised starting salaries to over £32,400 in Outer London, including Enfield North and the London Borough of Enfield. The Department hopes that further rises next academic year will see starting salaries reach £30,000 in all areas of England, ensuring that they are competitive relative to alternative professional graduate starting salaries.

Decisions on pay ranges and allowances, such as the London pay scales, are based on recommendations by the STRB, the independent body that advises on teachers' pay and conditions. This year's written evidence to the STRB sets out the Government's position on pay awards this year, detailing how these need to strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, whilst not increasing the country's debt further or exacerbating inflation. The evidence includes an assessment of recruitment and retention trends broken down geographically, including for areas such as Outer London. The final pay award decisions for the 2023/24 academic year will be determined later this year.

The Department announced a financial incentives package of up to £181 million for those starting Initial Teacher Training in the 2023/24 academic year, a £52 million increase on the last cycle. The Department is providing bursaries worth up to £27,000 and scholarships worth up to £29,000 to encourage trainees to apply to train in key secondary subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing.

The Department also provides a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 annually for mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing teachers in the first five years of their careers who work in disadvantaged schools nationally, including within Education Investment Areas. The eligibility criteria and the list of eligible schools are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/levelling-up-premium-payments-for-teachers>.

ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Bill Esterson:

[185781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the information on available grid capacity on the introduction of depot charging facilities at logistics sites.

Andrew Bowie:

Ofgem is responsible for regulating networks so that they are ready for future energy needs, through the price control process. Under the most recent price control, covering 2023-2038, electricity distribution network operators submitted business plans that took account of capacity needs in their areas, including from electric vehicle charging at depots and other locations. Ofgem has allowed £22.2bn for

investment in distribution networks in this period, including £3.1bn for network upgrades to enable technologies, like charging depots, to join the grid.

■ Energy: Business

Ruth Cadbury: [\[185002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, pursuant to the Answer of 23 March 2023 to Question 168055 on Energy: Business, what additional steps (a) Ofgem and (b) his Department have taken to support non-domestic retailers which are in fixed-term contracts for their energy supply.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[185003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether his Department has made an estimate of the number of hospitality businesses which entered fixed-term energy contracts between September 2022 and November 2022.

Amanda Solloway:

The Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) is now live and will run until 31 March 2024. Contract negotiations are a commercial matter for suppliers and their customers. However, I met with Ofgem and energy suppliers in March to urge suppliers to do all they can to support their customers and will continue to press them on this matter. The Department has not made an estimate of the number of hospitality businesses which entered fixed-term energy contracts between September and November 2022.

■ Energy: Medical Equipment

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[184890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to support people with complex disabilities who run medical equipment at home with the cost of energy.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[184891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial support with the cost of energy for disabled people who run medical equipment at home.

Amanda Solloway:

As we explore possible approaches to consumer protection from April 2024, we are working with disability organisations, considering the costs for disabled people, and assessing the need for specific support for disabled people using medical equipment in the home.

I am attending the next quarterly meeting of the Disability Charities Consortium on Wednesday 24th May, and I am meeting my Hon. Friend the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work on 6th June to discuss consumer protection for people with disabilities.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[185194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of expanding the eligibility for the electricity rebate available to people who run medical equipment at home.

Amanda Solloway:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues.

As we explore possible approaches to consumer protection from April 2024, the Government is working with disability organisations, considering the costs for disabled people, and assessing the need for specific support for disabled people using medical equipment in the home. I am attending the next quarterly meeting of the Disability Charities Consortium on Wednesday 24th May, and I am meeting my Hon. Friend the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work on 6th June to discuss consumer protection for people with disabilities.

■ **Great British Insulation Scheme**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[185511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for what reason Band E properties in (a) England will be excluded from the Great British Insulation Scheme and (b) Scotland and Wales will be included in that scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government chose to offer support to households in Council Tax bands A-D in England and A-E in Scotland and Wales. These Council Tax bands capture a similar proportion of eligible homes in each nation, around 81%, 86%, and 87% for England, Scotland and Wales respectively.

These Council Tax bands serve as a proxy for income, ensuring the scheme proportionately captures low- to mid-income households in each nation. Such households are more likely to be at risk of struggling to pay their energy bills and are ineligible for support through other energy efficiency schemes.

■ **Heating: Finance**

Julian Knight:

[\[185009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what funding his Department is providing for systems drawing heat from deep underground.

Graham Stuart:

Support for heat networks which use geothermal heat is available from the £288m Green Heat Network Fund. This three-year fund opened in March 2022 and offers capital grants to support the commercialisation and construction of new low and zero carbon heat networks. Development funding is also available from the Department's Heat Networks Delivery Unit to help heat network developers explore opportunities for technologies such as deep geothermal.

■ National Grid: Renewable Energy

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[905092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of lead times for connecting renewable energy projects to the grid.

Andrew Bowie:

Years of world-leading green investment has meant we have connected the second highest amount of renewable electricity in Europe since 2010. This has put pressure on the electricity network and reducing connection timescales is a high priority for Government.

■ Nuclear Power

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[905087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the supply of nuclear power on energy bills.

Andrew Bowie:

New nuclear power is central to our plans for ensuring UK energy security and reaching Net Zero. Modelling in the 2020 Energy White Paper indicated that low-cost electricity system solutions at very low carbon intensities are far more likely to be achieved with a combination of new nuclear and gas CCUS.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Plastics

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[185219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential for soil-biodegradable mulch films certified to the BSI standard BS EN17033 to replace single-use agriplastics.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency has not carried out any assessments of the British Standards associated with biodegradable mulch films nor its potential to replace single-use agriplastics.

However, once a single-use plastic has fulfilled its intended use (regardless of its construction/biodegradability) there will be a presumption that on discard the plastic will become a waste and should therefore be managed as part of normal waste management controls. This would not support a ploughing in the waste plastic into the soil on the field.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Daisy Cooper:

[\[185852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with (a) growers and (b) growers associations on the potential merits of extending the length of the seasonal workers visa for the harvesting of crops which have a longer growing season than six months.

Mark Spencer:

Defra holds regular discussions and roundtable events with growers and growers associations.

Ministers met with industry stakeholders, including growers, at the Farm to Fork Summit on 16 May at which the Government confirmed that the number of Seasonal Worker visas available in 2024 for horticulture will again be 45,000 (plus 2,000 for poultry), with the potential for a further 10,000 visas if necessary, contingent on sponsors and growers improving and abiding by worker welfare standards as previously agreed.

The Seasonal Worker visa route was designed to support horticulture growers in the UK during peak production periods, whilst maintaining robust immigration control. It allows horticultural businesses to recruit foreign workers for up to six months to work in both the edible and ornamental sectors. It was not designed to meet the full labour needs of the horticulture sector nor to be a source of permanent labour.

Furthermore, the Seasonal Worker visa, which is applied for outside the UK and lasts for six months or less, incurs no NHS surcharge of £624 per year, unlike a nine month or longer visa which would incur this cost to seasonal workers.

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[185730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 May 2023 to Question 183643 on Public Health, what other types of (a) financial and (b) societal costs are caused by air pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

Air pollution can have adverse effects on human health, labour productivity, crop yields, the natural environment, and the built environment. In March 2023 Defra updated its damage costing guidance, which can be found [here](#).

■ Cosmetics: Animal Experiments

Emma Hardy:

[\[184477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment had been made of the efficacy of existing non-animal methods of safety testing of cosmetic products ingredients before it began issuing licenses for animal testing.

Rebecca Pow:

As the GB regulator for REACH, HSE has closely supported the development of a number of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development guidelines on in vitro toxicity testing which are recognised as the international standard. These tests are applicable for testing on a diverse range of chemical substances which can include cosmetic product ingredients. Other methods such as predictive computer modelling can also be used as appropriate.

Modern alternatives mean there are opportunities to design non-animal testing strategies for these chemicals so that worker and environmental safety is unlikely to be compromised, and potentially enhanced. In this way, working with industry, the Government is seeking to improve safety by the application of new non-animal science and technology.

■ Countryside**Dr Luke Evans:**[\[185305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of trespassing laws on protection of the countryside.

Trudy Harrison:

The Home Office is responsible for such laws. Under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the police have powers to direct trespassers who are residing on land to leave. Failure to comply with the direction is a criminal offence. Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Government strengthened these powers of direction to:

- o broaden the types of harm that are covered by the police power to direct trespassers away, to include damage, disruption and distress;
- o increase the period in which trespassers directed away from the land must not return from three months to 12 months; and
- o enable police to direct people away from land that forms part of a highway.

No recent assessment has been undertaken by Defra on the adequacy of these laws with respect to trespassing on private land for the purposes of recreation.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides access across large parts of the English countryside and a right to roam across open access land, giving the public a right of access to most areas of mountain, moor, heath, down, registered common land and coastal margin. This is subject to certain restrictions and behaviours set out in the Act including those considered to be a criminal offence.

Public Spaces Protection Orders and the use of byelaws can also be used to address local issues to protect the countryside where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so.

The refreshed Countryside Code sets out the rules that we all must follow to enjoy visits to the countryside safely and responsibly.

■ Countryside: Hostels

Rachael Maskell:

[\[185848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she will take to implement her Environmental Implementation Plan on improving YHA facilities.

Trudy Harrison:

The [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#) (EIP23) set's out government's delivery plan for improving the environment within a generation.

EIP23 references the Green Recovery Challenge Fund's Generation Green programme. This programme was led by YHA England and Wales, working with a consortium of fifteen outdoor education providers. Generation Green successfully provided more than 100,000 opportunities to connect young people to nature; and facilitated 659 skilled volunteer roles in the outdoor sector.

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund funding of almost £80m has now been awarded.

■ Dairy Farming: Government Assistance

Jane Hunt:

[\[185630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to increase the level of financial support available to dairy farmers.

Mark Spencer:

We recognise the challenges facing the dairy sector. The Prime Minister set out new support for farmers to strengthen food security and grow the economy at the Farm to Fork Food Summit on 16 May 2023. This includes the creation of a £1 million programme to help dairy businesses, particularly SMEs, to seize export opportunities.

In addition, the Government has acted to support the agricultural sector, including dairy farmers, in a number of ways.

- The Farming Investment Fund offers opportunities for dairy farmers (and others) to apply for grants towards the purchase of equipment and technology, and to help fund transformational infrastructure projects, that increase productivity, boost environmental sustainability and improve animal health and welfare. Eligible investments include slurry infrastructure and robotic milking systems for example.
- Furthermore, in May 2023, the Government more than doubled the funding available in the first round of Slurry Infrastructure grant, with further rounds to follow. The scheme will support a large number of dairy farmers to upgrade their slurry systems, to improve organic nutrient use, reduce pollution and improve farm productivity.
- The Government made changes in 2022 to guidance on farmers using manures and steps aimed at bringing about more sustainable fertiliser technologies through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI).

- 2022 also saw increased grants for farmers and growers and boosting research and development through the Farming Innovation Programme.
- In 2022, the Basic Payment Scheme payment was amended so that payments are made in two instalments to give farmers greater financial fluidity for the remainder of the agricultural transition period.
- In January 2023, I set out in the Environmental Land Management Update details of new SFI actions that will be available in 2023. In 2024 we will be adding new actions to those currently available in SFI and Countryside Stewardship and improving a number of existing Countryside Stewardship options, which will provide more support to the industry and drive uptake at a time of rising costs for farmers as a result of global challenges.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Incinerators and Recycling

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[185760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of her Department's waste is (a) reused and (b) incinerated.

Rebecca Pow:

0.47% of our department's waste is reused and 33.4% is incinerated, which includes contaminated waste from our laboratories.

■ Farms: Government Assistance

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[185454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support smaller farms that want to apply for a Farming Equipment and Technology Fund 2023 grant but cannot afford to pay for the items they applied for funding for before the grant is paid.

Mark Spencer:

To support smaller farms wishing to apply for a Farming Equipment and Technology Fund 2023 grant we have reduced the minimum grant from £2,000 to £1,000 and introduced a range of lower priced items on to the list.

■ Flood Control: Somerset

David Warburton:

[\[185044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the resilience of flood protection measures in (a) Somerset, (b) East Somerset and (c) the River Cam catchment area during the winter of 2022–23.

Rebecca Pow:

Much of Somerset is below sea level and many of its rivers are raised above the ground, so it will always be at risk of coastal and fluvial flooding. In January 2023, the Environment Agency put in place the largest temporary pumping operation in its history on the Somerset Levels and Moors. In combination with the innovative way

water was managed through the system, this meant that on this occasion, widespread flooding of property was avoided.

During the Spring, East Somerset has experienced some of the heaviest rainfall ever recorded in the area. This has led to roads becoming unpassable, and in the case of the River Cam, around 100 houses flooding. In all cases, the flood protection measures performed as designed, but were overwhelmed by the volume and intensity of rainfall.

■ Floods: Somerset

David Warburton:

[\[185043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many (a) homes and (b) businesses in Somerset were affected by flooding in each of the last 10 years.

Rebecca Pow:

PROPERTY FLOODING OVERVIEW

Year	Number of Properties Flooded
2011	15
2012	11
2013	2
2014	173
2015	0
2016	22
2017	10
2018	0
2019	0
2020	26
2021	45
Total	304

The above table shows the number of properties flooded during the last 10 years across both business and homes, and includes all sources of flooding – surface water, fluvial and coastal. The source of most of the data comes from Somerset Council report produced post flooding which is why the information is not split

between homes and businesses. These reports are produced as part of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010. The reports from 2022 have not yet been published, although the Environment Agency are not aware of any properties flooding in Somerset during 2022.

For 2023 the Environment Agency estimated that 5 properties flooded in January and around 120 properties flooded in May, however they are working with Somerset Council to confirm exact numbers.

■ Flowers: Sales

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[185277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage (a) supermarkets and (b) other vendors to sell British-grown flowers.

Mark Spencer:

Defra meets regularly with food retailers to discuss a range of issues including selling British produce. However, it is not for HM Government to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions by companies.

■ Foie Gras

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[185613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 March 2023 to Question 165497 on Foie Gras, when his Department intends to finish building its evidence base to inform future decisions on the import and sale of foie gras.

Mark Spencer:

No end date has been set for building the evidence base in relation to foie gras.

■ Food: Labelling

Henry Smith:

[\[185239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to introduce mandatory animal-welfare labelling on supermarket products.

Mark Spencer:

In 2021, Defra ran a call for evidence to gather data on the potential impacts of different types of labelling reform for animal welfare. We received over 1,600 responses and a summary of these responses is available on GOV.UK.

Based on the evidence provided, Defra committed in the Government's Food Strategy to consult on improving and expanding mandatory animal welfare labelling, covering both domestic and imported products, in 2023.

■ Food: Prices**Dan Garden:**[\[185819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions she has held with trade union representatives of food workers on the impact of the increase in grocery prices on employment and remuneration of workers in that sector.

Mark Spencer:

Defra meets regularly with trade association groups such as the National Farmers Union. It is not for HM Government to comment on wages of private businesses nor to comment on day-to-day commercial decisions.

■ Goats and Sheep: Electronic Training Aids**Matt Vickers:**[\[185167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of banning electronic collars for (a) sheep and (b) goats.

Mark Spencer:

No such assessment has been made.

Defra did commission the independent Animal Welfare Committee to examine the welfare implications of using virtual fencing systems on livestock, where livestock are fitted with electronic collars as part of a system for containing, monitoring and moving livestock. The Committee's report was published in October 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awc-opinion-on-the-welfare-implications-of-using-virtual-fencing-for-livestock/opinion-on-the-welfare-implications-of-using-virtual-fencing-systems-to-contain-move-and-monitor-livestock#introduction>. We are keeping the issue under review.

All livestock are protected by comprehensive and robust animal health and welfare legislation: the Animal Welfare Act 2006 makes it an offence either to cause any captive animal unnecessary suffering or to fail to provide for the welfare needs of the animal; and The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 set down detailed requirements on how farmed livestock should be kept.

■ Government Departments: Plastics**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[185757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an estimate with Cabinet colleagues of the number of single use plastic items that were used on the central government office estate in each financial year since 2018-19.

Trudy Harrison:

The Greening Government Commitments 2021 to 2025 framework committed departments to eliminating consumer single use plastics (CSUPs) from the central

government office estate by 2025. Prior to this, we do not hold any figures and are not able to estimate.

Figures for the 2021 to 2022 financial year onwards will be published in the Greening Government Commitments annual reports, the first of which is due in 2023.

■ Government Departments: Recycling

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[185759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's Greening Government Commitments 2020 to 2021 annual report, published 27 April 2023, whether she has made a comparative assessment of the adequacy of the proportion of (a) her Department's and (b) other Department's waste that is recycled.

Trudy Harrison:

The Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) 2020 to 2021 annual report includes data on how much each department recycles. This report was part of the GGCs 2016 to 2020 framework which included a target to increase the proportion of waste recycled for each department.

The GGCs 2021 to 2025 framework includes a target to increase the proportion of waste recycled to at least 70% of overall waste.

With the exception of greenhouse gas emissions, the GGCs targets are aggregate central government targets and not bespoke minimum performance targets for individual departments. This is to allow flexibility for departments to make appropriate improvements to their estates and operations. Recognising that departments and their arms-length bodies carry out a wide variety of functions.

■ Horticulture

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[\[185278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support local and sustainable horticulture.

Mark Spencer:

At the recent Farm to Fork Summit the Prime Minister made a commitment to maintain food production at current levels, where 60 per cent by value of all the food we need is sourced domestically. A wide range of measures to support the horticulture sector were announced, including a replacement Fruit & Vegetables Aid Scheme for England from 2026. Also announced was a review of the horticulture supply chain to help ensure farmers are paid a fair price for their produce.

■ Horticulture: Peat

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[185966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's announcement on 23 March 2023 that it plans to introduce a phased

reduction in the use of peat for the professional horticultural sector from 2026, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of that ban on the capacity of UK growers to supply garden centres with the same number of tree and plant varieties.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[185967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's announcement on 23 March 2023 that it plans to introduce a phased reduction in the use of peat for the professional horticultural sector from 2026 onwards, how will the technical exemptions be determined; and what her planned timescale is for announcing what these will be.

Trudy Harrison:

An impact assessment was completed alongside our consultation in 2022. As the plans for the legislation evolve that assessment will be updated alongside our legislative proposals. The Government is currently co-funding research into peat free growing media with the RHS and industry leaders over the next three years; this research will expand the knowledge base regarding the quality of peat free growing media and our understanding of particular technical difficulties.

Technical exemptions have already been identified for plugs using less than 150ml of substrate and for casing material for mushroom production. Evidence provided for other plant types or production processes requiring a technical exemption will be considered and we will be engaging with the sector to refine any of these. We are proposing that the legislation will be framed to allow ministers to amend the dates, or modify the exemption, where exigent circumstances mean that the removal date is shown to be unachievable. The proposed legislation will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows.

■ **Land: Dartmoor**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[184349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries in the debate on Farming on Dartmoor of 18 April 2023, Official Report, column 82WH, whether the independent review of the ecological condition of designated sites on Dartmoor will include an assessment of the recommendations made by Natural England on the necessary steps to deliver the Government's commitment to protect 30 percent of land by 2030.

Mark Spencer:

We are currently developing our plans for the independent review of the ecological condition of protected sites. We will announce further details of the review's panel members and scope shortly.

■ Landfill

Kerry McCarthy: [\[185758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 18 of her Department's Greening Government Commitments Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021, published April 2023, what steps her Department is taking to decrease the proportion of its waste that goes to landfill.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra sends around 18.5% of its waste to landfill. A large proportion of this is end-of-life timber from our forestry and national park land holdings (such as gates and fences). This timber is chemically treated, which vastly extends its life but means it can only be landfilled or incinerated. We are working with the affected bodies to move the waste treatment of these items up the waste hierarchy away from landfill.

■ Landfill: Health

Ruth Jones: [\[184193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the prevalence of potential links between landfill sites and health inequalities.

Rebecca Pow:

Conditions in the environmental permits for individual landfill sites take into account the potential impact on local receptors of a range of environmental risks, including air pollution.

■ Pesticides: Licensing

Peter Aldous: [R] [\[185894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Government's decision to withdraw parallel trade permits for plant protection products on the agriculture industry.

Mark Spencer:

The parallel trade arrangements set out in EU legislation were based on information sharing between the Member States. Parallel trade permits that were in place when the UK left the EU have been continued for a time. Defra is aware that sales of these parallel products end on 30 June 2023, and the final date for use is 30 June 2024 and, with the Health and Safety Executive, we are monitoring the situation.

Peter Aldous: [R] [\[185895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with the Health and Safety Executive on the potential impact of parallel trade permits for plant protection products on (a) competitiveness and (b) productivity in the agriculture industry.

Mark Spencer:

The parallel trade arrangements set out in EU legislation were based on information sharing between the Member States. Parallel trade permits that were in place when the UK left the EU have been continued for a time. Defra is aware that sales of these parallel products end on 30 June 2023, and the final date for use is 30 June 2024, and we are monitoring the situation.

■ **Pets: Prizes****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[185773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution by Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park in the House of Lords on 20 June 2022, Official Report, column HL3, if she will publish the findings of work commissioned by her Department on the issue of pets being handed out as prizes in England.

Rebecca Pow:

In England and Wales, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 prohibits the sale of an animal, or the transfer of an animal as a prize, to anyone under the age of 16 years old. It also ensures that any person winning an animal as a prize is obliged to provide for its welfare. Our assessment is that these restrictions continue to be balanced and proportionate. Defra has not commissioned any additional external research into pets as prizes, but has commissioned other external research into the keeping of primates as pets, which is ongoing.

■ **Waste Management****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[185756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the policy paper entitled Greening Government Commitments 2021 to 2025, published on 15 December 2022, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of including (a) reuse options in the recycling target, or (b) a separate reuse target in section B: Minimising waste and promoting resource efficiency.

Trudy Harrison:

In the Greening Government Commitments 2021 to 2025 framework, government asked departments to report on the introduction and implementation of reuse schemes for the first time. This will allow us to see how they are being implemented across government and how they fit into the waste landscape.

■ **Water: Sewage****Jim McMahon:**[\[185358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May to Question 183788 on Water: Sewage, if she will publish the dates of meetings she has had on the impact of sewage pollution on public health.

Rebecca Pow:

The department regularly publishes transparency data, including on ministerial meetings.

Jim McMahon:[\[185359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May to Question 183788 on Water: Sewage, which overflows cause the most harm to public health.

Rebecca Pow:

In August 2022 the Government launched the most ambitious plan in water company history. In our £56 billion Plan, protecting public health at bathing waters was one of our main priorities.

Storm overflows near bathing waters have the potential to impact public health. Our [plan](#) to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows includes a specific target for bathing water. This ensures we are prioritising improvements that secure the greatest benefit for public health.

Jim McMahon:[\[185360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May to Question 183788 on Water: Sewage, which overflows cause the most harm to the environment.

Rebecca Pow:

In August 2022 the Government launched the most ambitious [plan](#) to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows in water company history. In our £56 billion Plan, protecting public health at bathing waters is one of our main priorities. The Plan frontloads action in particularly important and sensitive areas including designated bathing waters and high priority ecological sites.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Argentina: Interest Rates****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[185521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of trends in the increase in interest rates in Argentina.

David Rutley:

It is important that Argentina has a prosperous and stable economy. On 25 March 2022, the UK voted in favour of a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal and supported the completion of the four subsequent quarterly reviews of the programme. The UK believes Argentina's IMF programme provides the best vehicle for macroeconomic stability. As agreed in the programme, interest rate rises are part of a

set of measures to control rising inflation and exchange rate pressures. We expect Argentina to continue honouring its commitments as part of the IMF agreement.

■ **BGI Genomics: Queen Mary Bioenterprises Innovation Centre**

Catherine West:

[\[185787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential national security implications of Chinese genomics company BGI Genomics opening a genome sequencing hub in the Queen Mary Bio Enterprises Innovation Centre.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We continually monitor threats to our data, and will not hesitate to take action if necessary to protect our national security. We expect all firms to fully comply with UK privacy laws. Those which do not may be investigated and subject to enforcement action. We have also strengthened measures to prevent the transfer of assets or technology that could pose national security risks. This includes upgrading our export control regime and Military End Use Control and introducing the National Security and Investment Act. As part of the new UK Biological Security Strategy, the Government is undertaking a full programme of work to assess how we can minimise the risks from biological data to protect our burgeoning bioeconomy, without stifling innovation, and build confidence in sharing personal data to improve health outcomes in the UK and across the world.

■ **Climate Change: Finance**

Alan Brown:

[\[185330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27 supports highly- indebted countries that have been impacted by climate change.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

At COP27, the UK and other parties agreed to establish a Transitional Committee under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop loss and damage funding arrangements, including a fund, by COP28. As a member of the Transitional Committee the UK will be encouraging fellow members to consider a broad range of funding arrangements for loss and damage. We will work closely with members and other UNFCCC parties to ensure these funding arrangements consider how to support countries at high risk of debt distress from climate related loss and damage.

Alan Brown:

[\[185331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's role in the United Nations Climate Change Transitional Committee to help ensure that (a) new funding

arrangements for the Loss and Damage Fund are allocated to countries most impacted by climate change and (b) that those arrangements are finalised at COP28.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

At COP27, the UK and other parties agreed to establish a Transitional Committee under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop a loss and damage fund and funding arrangements by COP28. We recognise how urgent it is to ensure the countries most impacted by climate change can respond to the risks they face. We are actively engaging with the committee members and other UNFCCC parties to ensure funding arrangements deliver effectively for those most vulnerable to climate change and are committed to pressing the transition committee to deliver results at COP28.

■ **Development Aid: Research**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[185335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it remains his policy to increase Official Development Assistance spend on R&D from £600 million in 2021-22 to £1 billion in 2024-25.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The International Development Strategy is clear that ODA Research & Development (R&D) is critical to tackling poverty and addressing the major challenges facing the world. In March 2023, the UK published its International Technology Strategy, which sets out how we will develop technology solutions to global challenges through investment in mission-driven R&D. ODA R&D allocations for 24/25 will be announced in due course, but I [Minister Mitchell] can confirm that the UK's total direct funding for R&D will reach £20 billion a year by 2024/25 as planned. This is a cash increase of around a third compared to 2021/22, and the largest ever increase over an spending review period.

■ **Ecuador: Politics and Government**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[185520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Ecuadorian counterpart on impeachment proceedings of President Lasso.

David Rutley:

We have been following developments in Ecuador closely since the start of the impeachment process against President Lasso at the end of March. Staff at the British Embassy in Quito hold regular discussions with the Ecuadorean Government and other stakeholders on a range of issues including the political outlook. I [Minister Rutley] discussed the impeachment process with the Ecuadorean Foreign Minister when I last met him on 5 May in London.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Fleur Anderson: [\[185130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of UK involvement in the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

Fleur Anderson: [\[185132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace in encouraging people-to-people peacebuilding programs.

David Rutley:

There is already a range of UK aid-funded development programming in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, outside of what the UK may do in the future with this fund, which works to preserve the prospect of a negotiated two-state solution. The UK is a key donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), providing essential humanitarian support to Palestinian refugees across its five zones of operation. Our annual contribution to their programme budget helps UNRWA provide education to over 533,000 children a year (half of them girls), and access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees.

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace: USA

Fleur Anderson: [\[185131\]](#)

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

David Rutley:

The Iranian Government is responsible for persistent, widespread and serious human rights violations and can have no international credibility in this sphere. This is why we worked with partners in December to ensure Iran was expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The Social Forum is a subsidiary body of the UN Human Rights Council which the UK does not traditionally attend. The chair rotates between members' ambassadors according to region and this year is the turn of the Asia-Pacific region. The UK will continue to work closely with our partners to hold Iran to account in international fora; to that end we regularly meet with UN representatives, both in the UK and overseas through UK Missions in Geneva, New York and around the world.

■ Iran: United Nations

Sir Julian Lewis: [\[185726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the United Nations Human Rights Council against the

appointment of Iran's ambassador to the UN as chairman of its Social Forum 2023; and for what reason no alternative candidate was nominated by the UK.

David Rutley:

The Iranian Government is responsible for persistent, widespread and serious human rights violations and can have no international credibility in this sphere. This is why we worked with partners in December to ensure Iran was expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The Social Forum is a subsidiary body of the UN Human Rights Council which the UK does not traditionally attend. The chair rotates between members' ambassadors according to region and this year is the turn of the Asia-Pacific region. The UK will continue to work closely with our partners to hold Iran to account in international fora; to that end we regularly meet with UN representatives, both in the UK and overseas through UK Missions in Geneva, New York and around the world.

■ **Israel: Palestinians**

Sarah Olney:

[\[185046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israel counterparts on (a) the demolitions of homes and infrastructure on the West Bank, (b) use of excessive force and potential attacks on healthcare personnel and facilities, (c) settlement expansion and (d) restrictions on freedom of movement for residents of the West Bank.

David Rutley:

The UK Government strongly condemns all forms of violence towards healthcare workers, who should be able to go about their work without obstruction. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians. We urge Israel to halt its settlement expansion.

The UK has consistently urged the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to de-escalate the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Foreign Secretary made this point to Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen when he met with him in person on 21 March. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon also frequently engages with Israelis and Palestinians on these issues.

■ **Kenya: Development Aid**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[184930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) funding and (b) other support his Department plans to provide to the Deris Wanaag programme; and whether his Department plans to allocate any Official Development Assistance to this programme.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK will provide £10 million of Official Development Assistance over 3 years to implement the Deris Wanaag, or Good Neighbourliness programme. This is a cross-border project seeking to enhance peace and stability and strengthen social and economic dynamics, in the border areas between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. This programme was jointly launched by the Deputy President of Kenya, Ethiopian Minister for Peace, Federal Government of Somalia's Minister for Internal Security along with the British High Commissioner.

■ Malawi and Mozambique: Debts**Caroline Lucas:**[\[184936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the urgency of the need of (a) Malawi and (b) Mozambique for debt relief following the impact of Cyclone Freddy.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Government of Malawi continues to engage with the international financial institutions to try and achieve a sustainable debt position, and the UK is supportive of these efforts. The recently released Post Disaster Needs Assessment of the cyclone confirms that cyclone damage will cut GDP growth by an estimated 0.5 per cent this year.

The UK supported Mozambique's response to Cyclone Freddy with emergency shelter and cholera support. We are working closely with other multilaterals, to adapt existing programmes where possible to respond to Cyclone Freddy such as: Health and infrastructure/water and sanitation.

■ Nigeria: Christianity**Jim Shannon:**[\[184973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of five separate attacks on Christian communities in Benue State in Nigeria.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Insecurity in Nigeria is detrimental to the country's diverse communities, including Christians. The UK's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief publicly noted the attacks in Benue State last month, calling on the Nigerian Government to bring perpetrators to account and protect people from violence. I also discussed concerns about increased violence in Nigeria with Bola Tinubu, incoming President, in December. Helping Nigeria tackle violence against civilians will remain a focus of the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership.

■ Pakistan: Human Rights and Security

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) security and (b) human rights situation in the province of Balochistan in Pakistan.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterparts on (a) allegations of continuing serious human rights violations committed by the security forces and other armed actors and (b) impunity for those violations in the province of Balochistan in Pakistan.

Leo Docherty:

We regularly discuss the security situation and human rights in Pakistan at a senior level with the relevant Pakistani authorities. On 30 January, Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed Pakistan's human rights situation with Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. In June 2022, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan discussed the issue of enforced disappearances in Balochistan with Minister Pirzada. Where there are credible allegations of human rights violations, we expect these to be fully investigated in line with due process.

■ Pakistan: Poverty

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps is his Department taking to help alleviate poverty in Balochistan.

Leo Docherty:

Since 2014 the UK has provided support to the most vulnerable people in Pakistan affected by conflict, including in Balochistan, through the Multi-Year Humanitarian Programme. The £120 million programme covers both immediate relief and early recovery interventions for shelter, food and non-food items, water and sanitation, and livelihood and protection needs.

■ Red Cross: Nicaragua

Fabian Hamilton: [\[185517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking diplomatic steps to support the Red Cross following the closure of its offices in Nicaragua.

David Rutley:

The decision by Nicaragua's National Assembly to rescind the legal status of the Nicaraguan Red Cross Association and confiscate its assets is deeply regrettable. The closure of the Nicaraguan Red Cross is the latest of more than 3,000 non-profit

organisations closed by Nicaraguan authorities since 2018. In a statement released on 19 April 2023, the UK underlined its deep concern at these closures and at the wider political situation in Nicaragua, which is shared by the international community.

■ Refugees: Caribbean

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[185519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to support the (a) Dominican Republic and (b) Turks and Caicos islands with potential increased in the number refugees arriving in those countries from Haiti.

David Rutley:

Rising instability in Haiti has led to increased numbers of people departing to nearby countries, including the Dominican Republic and Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI). The UK is working with international partners, including the governments of the Dominican Republic and TCI, and through our role on the United Nations Security Council to build a coordinated response that addresses the root causes of irregular migration from Haiti. The UK continues to provide TCI with support to strengthen its borders, including through border security expertise and the lease of a maritime surveillance aircraft.

■ Sudan: Armed Conflict

Alexander Stafford:

[\[185175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to support a lasting ceasefire in Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO is pursuing all diplomatic avenues to end the violence in Sudan and de-escalate tensions. We welcome the 7-day ceasefire agreement signed by the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces on 20 May, following the 11 May Jeddah Declaration which committed the parties to International Humanitarian Law, protecting civilians and to facilitate humanitarian action, including access. We call on both parties to uphold these agreements, implement the ceasefire and allow essential humanitarian support to reach the people of Sudan. We will continue to support international efforts to secure a ceasefire of hostilities, unhindered humanitarian access and the protection of civilians. This includes through our position as a Permanent Member at the United Nations, through engagement with the conflicting parties and cooperation with counterparts from African, Quad (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, UK and US) and European countries. We are also engaging with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union.

■ Sudan: Refugees**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[185050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support he is providing to refugees in countries neighbouring Sudan.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

On 4 May, the UK Government announced an initial £5 million allocation to help meet the urgent needs of tens of thousands of refugees and returnees in South Sudan and Chad. This support will benefit the United Nation's Children Fund, the World Food Programme and non-governmental organisations. We will continue to monitor the situation in Sudan closely, including the humanitarian and security impacts of the conflict on neighbouring countries.

■ Taiwan: Development Aid**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[185238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his department plans to provide (a) financial and (b) other support to Taiwan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK's longstanding policy on Taiwan has not changed: The UK has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan but a strong, unofficial relationship, based on deep and growing ties in a wide range of areas, and underpinned by shared democratic values. The UK-Taiwan relationship delivers significant benefits to both sides and has featured a wide range of exchanges and visits, for example on environmental, judicial and educational issues. We also support Taiwanese meaningful participation in international organisations, as a member where statehood is not a prerequisite, and as an observer or guest where it is.

■ Ukraine: War Crimes**Naz Shah:**[\[185670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking diplomatic steps to investigate potential mass burial sites in Mariupol.

Naz Shah:[\[185676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is investigating reports off mass burial sites in Mariupol.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is fully committed to holding Russia to account for its actions in Ukraine. Established accountability mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court's investigations and Ukrainian domestic judicial processes are investigating all allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The UK continues to support these independent investigations, including by establishing the Atrocity

Crimes Advisory Group with the US and EU to provide practical and financial support to assist the War Crimes Unit of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine.

■ Weather: Damage

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[185052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of anticipatory cash transfers to populations vulnerable to extreme weather events.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is working to scale up anticipatory action to reduce the impact of humanitarian crises on the most vulnerable. We have supported pilots of anticipatory cash through funding to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Initial evaluations of these show that cash is an efficient and effective anticipatory modality. We are also investing in social protection systems which play an important role in building vulnerable populations' resilience to extreme weather events before they occur. For instance, the FCDO-funded Hunger Safety Net Programme in Kenya routinely reaches 100,000 households and can scale up to an additional 275,000 households during drought to help more families better absorb the impact of climate shocks without falling deeper into poverty.

■ Zimbabwe: Development Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[185048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of amendments to the Private Voluntary Organizations Act in Zimbabwe on (a) the citizens of and (b) UK aid projects in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We are monitoring the human rights situation in Zimbabwe including the proposed Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill for civil society organisations, which has not yet been signed into law. We regularly assess its potential impact on civil society and UK aid projects in the country, which will depend on whether it is passed into law, the final text and how it would then be implemented.

We continue to engage with the Government of Zimbabwe, publicly and privately, on allowing space for civil society organisations to operate freely both in the specific context of the upcoming 2023 general elections and also longer term, as part of our dialogue on governance reforms and human rights, in concert with the wider international community. Indeed, during the conversation I had with President Mnangagwa in the margins of the Coronation we discussed human rights issues and the importance of peaceful, credible, and inclusive elections in Zimbabwe later this year.

■ Zimbabwe: Election Observers

Navendu Mishra:

[\[185343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to send election observers to Zimbabwe for the upcoming general election in that country.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK is working alongside international partners to prepare support for domestic and international election observation missions. However, in line with Zimbabwe's constitution and standard practice, invitations for observation missions will not be issued by the Government of Zimbabwe until the election date is announced.

Alongside a small British Embassy Harare electoral monitoring mission, we hope to see larger electoral missions from the African Union, Southern African Development Community, EU, Commonwealth, US and international and domestic NGOs.

■ Zimbabwe: Trade Unions

Navendu Mishra:

[\[185344\]](#)

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 restrictions placed on independent trade union activity in Zimbabwe.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The British Embassy in Harare regularly engages with a wide range of stakeholders to improve our understanding of political and economic issues in Zimbabwe. The UK does not fund trade unions or involve itself in industrial disputes between the Government and civil servants. However, as the periodic review of human rights in Zimbabwe shows, we are concerned by restrictions on freedom of assembly and the harassment of opposition supporters and civil society, and that the draft Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) amendment bill could be used to restrict civic space if passed into law.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies:

[\[185733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many times his Department has emailed a media release to journalists or weather forecasters about air pollution in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020, (d) 2021, (e) 2022 and (f) 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table shows how many times the Department has emailed a media release to journalists or weather forecasters about air pollution.

YEAR	COUNT
2018	4
2019	4
2020	0
2021	0
2022	1
2023	0

Geraint Davies:[\[185745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the extent of air pollution (a) directly and (b) indirectly affecting the health of (i) individuals and (ii) communities in England.

Maria Caulfield:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), formerly Public Health England, estimated future morbidity from air pollution, predicting that between 2017 and 2035 in England, 1,327,424 new cases of disease would be attributable to PM2.5, equivalent to 2,248 new cases of disease per 100,000 people. The highest numbers of these cases were predicted to be from coronary heart disease, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In England, an estimated 1,140,018 new cases of disease attributable to nitrogen dioxide is predicted by 2035, equivalent to 1,933 new cases of disease per 100,000 population. In 2022, the UKHSA estimated that the burden of long-term exposure to air pollution in 2019 in the United Kingdom was an effect equivalent to 29,000 to 43,000 deaths for adults aged 30 years old and over.

For local authorities and regions, the UKHSA produces annual estimates of the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution within the Public Health Outcomes Framework for England.

■ **Air Pollution: Death****Geraint Davies:**[\[185729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May 2023 to Question 183301 on Air Pollution: Death, if he will provide (a) a worked calculation and (b) weblinks to references to show how the number of deaths attributable to nitrogen dioxide in 2019 was calculated.

Maria Caulfield:

The most recent estimates, in 2019, of mortality burden associated with air pollution are published in the UK Health Security Agency Chemical Hazards and Poisons Report (2022), which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1083447/CHaPR_AQ_Special_Edition_2206116.pdf

The methodology used to calculate burden estimates, including nitrogen dioxide, is described in the article 'Updated mortality burden estimates attributable to air pollution' in the report and is based on the method described by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants. 'Associations of long-term average concentrations of nitrogen dioxide with mortality' (2018) report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nitrogen-dioxide-effects-on-mortality>

■ Autism: Young People

Ian Levy:

[185379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure adequate provision of support services for 16 and 17 year olds with autism and sensory issues who have left full time education but do not yet have access to adult services.

Maria Caulfield:

Through implementation of our national autism strategy, published on 21 July 2021, we are taking action to enable positive transitions into adulthood for autistic children and young people.

We are investing £121 million in 2023/24, including for Children and Young People's keyworkers, to improve community support for autistic people and people with a learning disability as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. In addition, in 2023/2024, £4.2 million of funding is available to improve services for autistic children and young people aged 0 to 25 years old, including post-diagnostic support.

On 2 March 2023, the Department for Education published the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision Improvement plan in response to the Green Paper published in March last year. As part of this, the Department is currently exploring good practice on transitions, to provide consistent, timely, high-quality preparation for children and young people with SEND, including autistic children and young people, when they transition between different stages of their education, into employment, or adult social care services. Following this, the Department for Education will publish guidance to support effective transitions between all stages of education, and into employment and adult services by the end of 2025.

■ Brain: Injuries

Dean Russell:

[185146]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress his Department has made on analysing responses to the acquired brain injury call for evidence.

Helen Whately:

The Department continues to work on the development of the strategy, based on the feedback from the Call for Evidence, the Patient and Public Voice Reference Group, the Programme Board and the Steering Group.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[184267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of repeated Covid-19 vaccine boosters on natural immunity for patients aged (a) over and (b) under 30.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 15 May 2023]: Natural immunity alone provides good levels of protection against severe COVID-19, while the combination of natural and repeated vaccine-induced immunity, through initial vaccination and subsequent vaccine boosters, create 'hybrid immunity' which is associated with even higher levels of protection in patients aged over and under 30 years old. These high levels of strong population immunity that have developed over the past two and a half years is under regular monitoring through UK Health Security Agency public health surveillance programmes.

Ben Everitt:[\[185164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) ensure that the necessary clinical guidelines are in place to identify adverse reactions to the covid-19 vaccines and (b) ensure that NHS staff in contact with potential patients with adverse reactions receive adequate training.

Maria Caulfield:

Every vaccine deployed in the United Kingdom is assessed by teams of scientists and clinicians and only authorised once it has met robust standards of safety, quality, and effectiveness set by Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Whilst severe adverse reactions are extremely rare, it is important that clinicians are fully trained in identifying and treating patients within their care. To ensure this, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has published various pieces of guidance for healthcare workers, which provides detailed information regarding adverse reactions following vaccination, available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1155194/COVID-19-vaccination-information-for-IHCP-v6.0-May2023.pdf

UKHSA and other professional groups have also developed a comprehensive training package to ensure vaccines are administered safely, including how to deal with possible adverse reactions to a vaccine. Safety is the utmost priority of any public health vaccination programme and all healthcare workers administering vaccines are

trained to the highest standards and are expected to follow all required clinical considerations via the NHS and UKHSA approved training programme.

Guidance on COVID-19 vaccination training to support healthcare workers involved in delivering the programme is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccinator-training-recommendations>

A competency assessment tool is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccinator-competency-assessment-tool>

NHS England guides sites to use this training. Accountability for staff being trained sits with the organisation delivering the service alongside an individual's professional responsibility.

Esther McVey:

[185548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on covid-19 vaccinations of the study by Fraiman, J., et al., entitled Serious adverse events of special interest following mRNA COVID-19 vaccination in randomized trials in adults published in the journal Vaccine on 22 September 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

Each COVID-19 vaccine candidate is assessed by teams of scientists and clinicians and only authorised once it has met robust standards of safety, quality, and effectiveness set by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The MHRA and the UK Health Security Agency continuously monitor the safety of all COVID-19 vaccines, including through reviewing all suspected Adverse Drug Reaction reports, and other data from the United Kingdom and internationally. Since the start of the pandemic, the National Institute for Health and Care Research has also allocated more than £110 million in funding for COVID-19 vaccine research, including consideration of vaccine safety.

■ Dentistry: Qualifications

Anthony Mangnall:

[185601]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to the Overseas Registration Exam for Non-European Economic Area nationals wanting to practice dentistry in the UK.

Neil O'Brien:

We have recently introduced legislation that enables the General Dental Council (GDC) to increase the capacity of its Overseas Registration Exam (ORE) and improve its international registration processes. It will be for the GDC, as an

independent regulator, to decide how best to use the flexibility that the legislation allows to increase the capacity of the ORE assessment.

The current legal framework for the ORE will remain in place until the GDC introduces new rules on the operation of the ORE 12 months after the legislation comes into force, in March 2024. In the meantime, the GDC has announced that it has tripled the number places for Part 1 of the ORE in response to the current demand, meaning there will be 600 places available for the August 2023 sitting of the ORE Part 1, instead of the usual 200.

■ Descovy

Steve Brine: [R] [184960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to provide Descovy to people with HIV through the NHS.

Will Quince:

People living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) who meet the relevant criteria can access emtricitabine and tenofovir alafenamide (Descovy®) through the NHS England clinical commissioning policy: *Tenofovir Alafenamide for treatment of HIV 1 in adults and adolescents*, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/f03-taf-policy.pdf>

■ Disease Control

Rushanara Ali: [184984]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of comments from Sir David King in the Independent newspaper on the UK's current preparedness for a pandemic.

Rushanara Ali: [184986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the likelihood of another global pandemic occurring within the next 50 years.

Maria Caulfield:

It is not possible to predict when the next pandemic will occur or what virus will cause it. Therefore, our strategic approach to pandemic preparedness constantly evolves in response to new scientific information, learning from our response to prior pandemics, responses to other infectious disease outbreaks and rigorous exercising to test our response mechanisms.

The Department is working with the Centre for Pandemic Preparedness in the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to ensure we have a flexible and capabilities-based approach to pandemic preparedness that will allow us to respond to future outbreaks, protect the health of the United Kingdom population, and contribute to minimising the wider societal disruption that pandemics and infectious diseases can cause.

The UKHSA brings together our world-leading public health science and expertise, cutting-edge capabilities in data analytics and genomic surveillance, at-scale testing and contact tracing capabilities to respond to a range of pandemic threats, as outlined in UKHSA's Science Strategy, published on 16 May 2023. Information on the strategy is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukhsa-science-strategy-2023-to-2033-securing-health-and-prosperity>

■ Evusheld

Julian Knight:

[185005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to develop a more clinically and cost-effective form of the Evusheld vaccine.

Will Quince:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continue to evaluate countermeasures for COVID-19 and other diseases working with the Government and industry. We are establishing a Vaccine Development and Evaluation Centre, this will bring together UKHSA's laboratory based activity, expertise and leadership in vaccine discovery, development and evaluation.

We will work with industry and academic partners to ensure that health security research priorities are addressed and will generate and apply world-leading scientific evidence to inform and optimise vaccination programmes.

■ Gene Therapies

Henry Smith:

[185241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential support for UK leadership in the adoption of cell and gene therapies of the recommendations of the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult's National Cell and Gene Therapy Vision for the UK, published in March 2022.

Will Quince:

The Department recognises that advanced cell and gene therapies will be an important part of the future of healthcare and the life sciences industry. We have been considering the recommendations of the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult's 'National Cell and Gene Therapy Vision for the UK', a report published by the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in March 2022 and the UK Strategic Stem Cell Forum's latest report 'A 10-year vision for stem cell transplantation and cellular therapies' published in July 2022.

As part of this, we have been conducting stakeholder engagement to further understand the challenges raised and whether there is a role for the Department in coordinating activity in this area.

■ General Practitioners: Bexley

Sir David Evennett:

[\[185531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the proportion of registered General Practitioners to residents is in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency and (b) the London Borough of Bexley.

Neil O'Brien:

We do not hold data for residents in these areas, so have used registered patients instead.

In March 2023, there were 5.9 fulltime equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice per 10,000 registered patients in Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency and 5.4 FTE doctors in general practice per 10,000 registered patients in the London Borough of Bexley.

■ General Practitioners: Enfield

Feryal Clark:

[\[185721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2023 to Question 182736 on General Practitioners: Enfield, how many GPs have worked in (a) Edmonton and (b) Enfield Southgate constituency in each year since 2010.

Will Quince:

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors in general practice in Edmonton and Enfield Southgate constituency since 2012. Data before 2012 was not available at practice level and could not be aggregated to constituency level as a result.

YEAR	FTE DOCTORS IN GENERAL PRACTICE IN EDMONTON CONSTITUENCY	FTE DOCTORS IN GENERAL PRACTICE IN ENFIELD SOUTHGATE CONSTITUENCY
2012	71	39
2013	84	43
2014	78	42
2015	68	39
2016	68	36
2017	69	37
2018	73	40
2019	72	43
2020	68	40

YEAR	FTE DOCTORS IN GENERAL PRACTICE IN EDMONTON CONSTITUENCY	FTE DOCTORS IN GENERAL PRACTICE IN ENFIELD SOUTHGATE CONSTITUENCY
2021	100	100
2022	101	101

Notes

1. FTE refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. 1 would indicate they work a full set of hours (37.5), 0.5 that they worked half time. In GPs in Training Grade contracts 1 FTE = 40 hours and in this table these FTEs have been converted to the standard wMDS measure of 1 FTE = 37.5 hours for consistency.
2. Figures shown do not include staff working in Prisons, Army Bases, Educational Establishments, Specialist Care Centres including Drug Rehabilitation Centres, Walk-In Centres and other alternative settings outside of traditional general practice such as urgent treatment centres and minor injury units.
3. Data from September 2015 onwards was collected using a new methodology and should therefore not be directly compared with data from before September 2015. Figures from September 2015 should be treated with caution as the data submission rates under the new methodology from practices were appreciably lower than for subsequent reporting periods. This means that the reported figures for the early years of the collection may be lower than the true picture. In September 2015, which was the first extract from the new Workforce Minimum Data Set, only three of four Health Education England regions submitted data.
4. Data from September 2015 onwards does not include estimates for practices that did not provide fully valid staff records.

Practices in Edmonton and Enfield Southgate constituency were identified using the National Statistics Postcode Lookup.

■ Health Services: Older People

Rob Roberts:

[\[184215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what was the average cost to the public purse of the provision of health and social care for people aged (a) 65 to 79 and (b) 80 and above in the latest period for which data was available.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 15 May 2023]: The information requested is not held centrally. Age cost curves are available for integrated care board-commissioned health services rather than overall health expenditure and unit costs for social care are available for over-65-year-olds, but not more granular age bands.

■ Members: Correspondence**Bill Esterson:**[\[184953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the email correspondence from the hon. Member for Sefton Central sent on 7 March 2023.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 18 May 2023]: We have received your letter of 7 March 2023 and will respond shortly.

■ Menorrhagia**Peter Dowd:**[\[185656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of including a question on heavy menstrual bleeding in the routine set of checks and questions that accompany a gynaecological procedure or consultation in a primary care setting.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. Menstrual health and gynaecological conditions is a priority within the Women's Health Strategy for England. This sets out our ambitions for raising awareness of menstrual health problems among women and healthcare professionals and tackling taboos and stigmas that can prevent women from accessing care. In addition, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on heavy menstrual bleeding contains recommendations for healthcare professionals on the diagnosis and management of heavy menstrual bleeding.

■ Menorrhagia: Health Services**Peter Dowd:**[\[185657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department uses low levels of engagement around menstrual health services as a criterion used to determine in which areas women's health hubs should be introduced.

Maria Caulfield:

Integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning services that meet the health needs of their local population. However, one of our priorities for the first year of the Women's Health Strategy is to encourage commissioners and providers across England to consider adopting these models of care.

We recently announced a £25 million investment over the next two years to accelerate the development of women's health hubs. More information on delivery of the funding will be announced in due course and the hub models that are subsequently adopted will need to be tailored to meet local women's needs. Our expectation, however, is that hubs will improve access and quality of care for services for menstrual problems, contraception, pelvic pain, menopause care and more. In

addition, the Department will be publishing a package of resources in July to support local systems in their development of women's health hubs.

Peter Dowd: [\[185660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will introduce a waiting time target for treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department has no current plans to introduce a waiting time target for treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding.

■ NHS Trusts: Finance

Feryal Clark: [\[184251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) he has and (b) officials in his Department have had recent discussions with NHS Trusts with financial deficits on their staffing levels for financial year 2023-24.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and Departmental officials have regular discussions with NHS trusts on a range of issues including financial deficits and staffing levels.

■ NHS: Databases

Margaret Greenwood: [\[183084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the scope of activities for which the Federated Data Platform is to be used; and who his Department plans to have access to that Platform.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[183086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether only NHS staff will be permitted to access data via the Federated Data Platform.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 3 May 2023]: The Department's Joint Investment Committee approved the Federated Data Platform Outline Business Case, which provided details of the scope of the platform and the likely estimated benefits. The Federated Data Platform will be initially built on five use cases, selected based on the National Health Service strategic priorities, the immediate benefit that they will realise and the wider insights that they will be able to provide. These are: population health management; care coordination; elective recovery; vaccines; and immunisation and supply chain.

Access to data in the Federated Data Platform will always be controlled by NHS organisations and only those working in health and social care will be able to access the data.

It is envisaged that the primary users of the Federated Data Platform will be NHS hospitals, integrated care systems (ICSs) and NHS England. At ICS level, the

benefits of the Federated Data Platform will also be realised by local authorities, local government and the third sector, who all contribute to providing health and care services.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[183087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Federated Data Platform, what safeguards are in place to ensure that it will not be used to market health or care services and products to patients.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 3 May 2023]: There will not be marketing activity within the Federated Data Platform (FDP). It will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Information Commissioner's Office guidance and associated regulations, standards and guidance. Access to data in the FDP will always be controlled by National Health Service organisations. Use of data in the FDP will be clearly auditable and will be assessed to ensure compliance with GDPR and Information Governance rules.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[183088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received from local NHS leaders on the proposed federated data platform.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 3 May 2023]: My Rt hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, regularly meets with a range of officials to advance transformational improvements across National Health Service data systems. These meetings include discussions on the proposed procurement of the Federated Data Platform.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[184102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking in the tendering process for the federated data platform contract to ensure that everyone working on the platform has an adequate level of security clearance.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: Security clearance checks will be undertaken for all staff as required once a preferred supplier has been identified for the Federated Data Platform, in line with standard practices.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[184103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on how many patients in England have written to NHS trusts to ask that their NHS data is not uploaded to the federated data platform.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: The Department and NHS England do not hold information relating to correspondence between patients and trusts in relation to the Federated Data Platform. Where applicable, National Data Opt Outs and Type 1 opt outs will apply to the Federated Data Platform. These opt-outs apply where

confidential patient information is being processed for secondary purposes and will not apply to an individual's direct care.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[184104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost of training NHS staff to use the federated data platform; and whether those costs are included in the specified value of the contract.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: The Federated Data Platform Programme in NHS England is working through the requirements for training, deployment support, and implementation to ensure that trusts, integrated care boards and NHS England are in a position to make full use of the Federated Data Platform capabilities.

Requirements for the ease of use and training solutions has been included within the platform procurement. A budget has been allocated to the Federated Data Platform programme to support the training and adoption support to trusts.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[184105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the federated data platform will (a) process and (b) be a repository of (i) anonymised patient data and (b) pseudonymised patient data.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: The Federated Data Platform will be a data processor on behalf of National Health Service organisations. Each integrated care system and trust will need to determine how they will use their platform and each use case will require a Data Protection Impact Assessment to articulate the data security and protection principals and lawful bases for deployment.

The type of data will depend on the uses of the data as defined by the individual NHS organisations. It is anticipated that there will be various types of data used including anonymised, pseudonymised and in some cases identifiable data, but subject to stringent controls on access and use.

■ NHS: Staff

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[185523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage medics who have received funding for their studies to work in the NHS.

Will Quince:

The Government is taking a range of actions to retain doctors in the National Health Service, including those who have received Government funding for their studies. This includes a number of initiatives delivered through NHS England's Enhancing Junior Doctors' Working Lives programme to improve the experience of doctors in postgraduate training. More generally, the NHS People Plan and the People Promise pledge to build a more modern, compassionate and inclusive culture in the NHS.

Analysis by the General Medical Council shows that 92% of doctors are present in specialty or general practitioner training within four years after completing the Foundation Programme. The Government continues to keep this under review.

■ Prescriptions

Nadia Whittome:

[\[183625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce delays in (a) dispensing and (b) delivering prescriptions to patients awaiting hospital discharge.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 10 May 2023]: Reasons for delayed discharge are various and include hospital process delays and patients awaiting the start of home-based care, residential, nursing home or intermediate care placements. Enabling people to be discharged from hospital more quickly with the right care and support in place contributes to speedier recovery and better outcomes for patients. The Government is providing £1.6 billion of funding over the next two years to enable the National Health Service and local authorities to improve hospital discharge.

Following discharge, the Discharge Medicines Service (DMS) enables hospitals to refer discharged patients to community pharmacy with information about medication changes made in hospital, community pharmacy can support patients to improve outcomes and prevent harm. Pharmacy delivery services are not usually commissioned or funded by the NHS. Decisions on how to dispense and supply medicines to patients who have specific needs should be made locally with due consideration of the individual's needs, in collaboration with the local primary care team.

■ Protective Clothing: China

Angela Rayner:

[\[184825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 3 May to question 172423 on Protective Clothing: China, what proportion of the items of Personal Protective Equipment disposed of since September 2022, has been (a) donated to other countries, (b) recycled and (c) sold.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: No items of Personal Protective Equipment held in China have been donated, recycled or sold since September 2022.

■ Protective Clothing: Waste Disposal

Angela Rayner:

[\[184827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of usable energy generation from the 3.14 billion items of PPE removed from stock through incineration up to 28 February 2023.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 17 May 2023]: No estimate has been made.

■ **Public Health****Geraint Davies:****[185731]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 10 May 2023 to Question 183643 on Public Health, what methodologies were used to estimate the costs to the NHS for each of the five risk factors specified.

Neil O'Brien:

The applicable methodologies for the National Health Service cost attributed to each of the risk factors outlined are explained in the following reports.

The estimated air pollution related costs to the NHS can be found in the Public Health England report 'Estimation of costs to the NHS and social care due to the health impacts of air pollution: summary report' (2018) which is available at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-a-tool-to-estimate-healthcare-costs

Estimated Alcohol related costs to the NHS (2009/10) can be found available at the following link:

www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/153862/response/378684/attach/3/Alcohol%20costs%202009%2010%20July%2023%202012.pdf

Estimated obesity related costs to the NHS can be found in the Frontier Economics report for Nova Nordisc, published in January 2022, 'Estimating the full costs of obesity' and is available at the following link:

www.frontier-economics.com/media/5094/the-full-cost-of-obesity-in-the-uk.pdf

Estimated Hypertension related costs to the NHS can be found in the Optimity Matrix Cost-effectiveness review of blood pressure interventions, 'A Report to the Blood Pressure System Leadership Board', published November 2014, available at the following link:

1. www.vdocuments.site/cost-effectiveness-review-of-blood-pressure-cost-effectiveness-review-of-blood.html?page=1

Estimated smoking related costs to the NHS can be found in the press release, 'Smoking costs society £17bn – £5bn more than previously estimated'. This is available at the following link:

www.ash.org.uk/media-centre/news/press-releases/smoking-costs-society-17bn-5bn-more-than-previously-estimated

■ Radiology: Vacancies**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[185065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the consequences for his policies of disparities in access to paediatric interventional radiology services across the UK..

Helen Whately:

The Surgery in Children Clinical Reference Group (CRG) provides clinical leadership and advice to NHS England and the Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Group, including on paediatric imaging and interventional radiology.

The issues linked to the concerns raised about access to interventional radiology are to be, presented to the Women and Children's Programme of Care Steering Group on the 28 June 2023, discussed at the Surgery in Children Clinical Reference Group meeting on 14 July and will also be presented to the Surgery in Children Operational Delivery Networks to incorporate into their respective network work programmes during 2023/24.

■ Suicide: Mental Health Services**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[185532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to provide funding for local suicide prevention services.

Maria Caulfield:

We are investing an additional £57 million in suicide prevention by March 24 through the NHS Long Term Plan. This will see investment in all areas of the country to support local suicide prevention plans. This was supplemented in 2021/22 by providing over £550,000 of funding to the Local Government Association for a support programme to help local authorities strengthen their plans and an additional £5.4 million of funding, distributed to 113 suicide prevention voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE) through the Suicide Prevention Grant Fund to support service delivery.

In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the Spring Budget that we will assign an extra £10 million over the next two years for a Suicide Prevention VCSE Grant Fund. This competitive grant fund will support the suicide prevention VCSE sector to deliver activity that can help sustain their services to help meet increased demand for support, or to embed preventative activity that can help to prevent suicides and stem the flow into crisis services.

■ Vaccination: Side Effects**Ben Everitt:** [\[185166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of conducting a national awareness campaign on (a)

the possible symptoms of adverse reactions to vaccines and (b) removing potential stigma towards adverse reactions to vaccines.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the National Health Service and Medicines Health Regulations Agency (MHRA) carry out work to ensure the public are aware of common and rare side effects from different vaccines. This information is on publicly available materials is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccination/covid-19-vaccines-side-effects-and-safety/>

The Department of Health and Social Care is working closely with UKHSA, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, media, social media and technology companies on innovative ways to tackle the proliferation of anti-vaccine messaging, limit misinformation, promote positive messages about vaccination and ensure that reputable sources such as NHS.UK are the most prominent. The Government uses extensive and targeted multi-channel communications, using trusted voices, and sharing accurate information about vaccination, informed by clinical expertise and analysis from UKHSA.

Anyone can report suspected side effects of vaccines to the MHRA to ensure safe and effective use.

■ **Vulnerable Adults: Reviews**

Sally-Ann Hart:

[\[185434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the safeguarding adult review report by Allison Sandiford entitled Safeguarding Adult Review: Overview Report: 'Jessica', published on 4 April 2023.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Anti-social Behaviour: Rural Areas**

Tim Farron:

[\[185593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) arrests and (b) prosecutions for antisocial behaviour in rural areas there have been in each year since 2020.

Tim Farron:

[\[185594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) arrests and (b) prosecutions for theft of agricultural machinery there have been in each year since 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on arrests for notifiable offences in England and Wales, by financial year, available here: [Police powers and procedures England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-statistics)

However, the data are collected by wider offence group, e.g. “theft offences”, therefore data on more specific offences such as antisocial behaviour and theft of agricultural machinery are not available.

Additionally, the data are collected by Police Force Area only with no further geographical breakdown, therefore the number of arrests that occurred in rural areas is not available.

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on prosecutions as part of the quarterly ‘Criminal Justice System’ statistical bulletin, available here: [Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2022)

The outcomes by offence data tool provides a breakdown of prosecutions by offence type, including offences which would be considered ASB. A detailed breakdown of items stolen within theft offences is not available.

The Home Office does not hold data showing trend in these crimes (ASB or theft of agricultural machinery) over time.

■ Asylum

Stephen Morgan: [\[185084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the impact of preliminary information questionnaires on the asylum decision backlog.

Stephen Morgan: [\[185085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the suitability of preliminary information questionnaires for potentially vulnerable asylum seekers with limited access to legal advice.

Robert Jenrick:

In order to reduce the legacy asylum decision backlog, questionnaires have been sent to legacy claimants from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Libya, Syria and Yemen as part of the Streamlined Asylum Process.

Questionnaires will also be sent to legacy claimants from Iran and Iraq who make up the highest volume of claimants within the legacy backlog allowing them to provide further information about their asylum claims after their initial screening interview upon arrival.

If a claimant has returned a questionnaire, it will be used to aid the decision maker to conduct a targeted or shorter interview, in turn reducing the duration of interviews, resulting in more efficient decision-making. We will closely review the use of questionnaires.

We understand that people may want to seek legal advice in order to complete the questionnaire and all asylum seekers have access to support through Legal Aid. We consider that the questionnaire can be completed without legal advice because we will contact the claimant or invite them to a personal interview should we require further information. We will not withdraw someone's asylum claim for failure to return the questionnaire alone.

■ Asylum: Africa and Middle East

Layla Moran:

[\[185791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claimants from (a) Afghanistan, (b) Eritrea, (c) Syria, (d) Yemen and (e) Libya were asked to fill in a questionnaire to fast track their application; and how many have had their claims (i) processed and (ii) granted since the questionnaire was introduced.

Robert Jenrick:

The number of claimants who have been asked to fill in a questionnaire to fast track their application and how many have had their claims processed are granted since the questionnaire was introduced is not information currently held in a reportable format.

■ Asylum: Hong Kong

Neil Coyle:

[\[185251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Hong Kong citizens in the UK are awaiting a decision on their asylum application as of 16 May 2023.

Neil Coyle:

[\[185252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people from Hong Kong who have been deported from the UK in each of the last five years.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration System Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on the number of Hong Kong citizens in the UK awaiting a decision on their asylum application are published in table Asy_D03 of the '[Asylum applications, decisions and resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. The latest data relates to the end of December 2022. Please note that data for year ending March 2023 will be published 25 May 2023.

Data on the number of people from Hong Kong who have been returned from the UK in each of the last 5 years are published in table Ret_D01 of the '[Detention and Returns detailed datasets](#)'. The latest data relates to the end of December 2022. Data for year ending March 2023 will be published 25 May 2023.

Please note that deportations are a subset of enforced returns.

Guidance on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the ['Research and statistics calendar'](#).

■ Asylum: Portland Port

Richard Drax: [\[184090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the service provider for the asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port, who will be responsible for providing (a) health and safety work and (b) risk assessments; and what are their relevant qualifications.

Robert Jenrick:

The vessel will be managed by an experienced accommodation supplier, under contractual terms agreed with the Home Office. The same supplier has safely and successfully managed two vessels for Ukrainian refugees for the Scottish Government over the past year. Through the Multi Agency Forum health sub group, we are working closely with local health colleagues to ensure appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place.

Richard Drax: [\[184091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port, whether the service provider has a system to report (a) accidents, (b) incidents, (c) dangerous occurrences and (d) fatalities, in compliance with the Health and Safety Executive's Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 Guidance; and what discussions she has had with Dorset Council on this.

Robert Jenrick:

The vessel will be managed by an experienced accommodation provider, under contractual terms agreed with the Home Office. The same supplier has safely and successfully managed two vessels for Ukrainian refugees for the Scottish Government over the past year. Through the Multi Agency Forum health subgroup, we are working closely with local health colleagues to ensure appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place.

Richard Drax: [\[184092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port, whether people accommodated on the vessel will be (a) new arrivals from small boats and (b) people currently placed in hotels.

Robert Jenrick:

The intention is to accommodate single adult male asylum seekers.

Those being accommodated are likely to be of different nationalities. They will already be in the asylum system, having been through robust security checks and health checks.

Richard Drax: [\[184093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port, what will happen to people accommodated on the vessel if their asylum claim is later unsuccessful.

Robert Jenrick:

Asylum seekers accommodated on the vessel whose claims are refused and have no further appeal rights will be removed from the UK. If people are granted asylum, we will work with local authorities across the UK to provide the support and appropriate accommodation.

Richard Drax: [\[184094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the asylum accommodation on a vessel in Portland Port, what plans she has for the provision of law enforcement for detaining vessel occupants suspected of (a) acting criminally and (b) committing antisocial behaviour.

Robert Jenrick:

Security forms an integral part of the proposed site. A specialist security provider will be working on site 24/7 and we are working closely with Dorset Police to ensure appropriate security arrangements are in place. Any matters relating to suspected criminal activity are reported to the police as a matter of routine.

The safety and security of the local communities, those asylum seekers on the sites and the staff are of the utmost importance.

■ **Judicial Review: Foreign Nationals**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[184905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many judicial review applications were made by foreign national offenders in prisons under the Human Rights Act 1998 in each of the last ten years; and how many and what proportion of these were successful.

Robert Jenrick:

Information on the number of judicial review applications made by foreign national offenders in prisons under the Human Rights Act cannot be accurately extracted from our internal systems and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Passports: Educational Visits**

Alyn Smith: [\[185121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the use of collective passports for school visits to the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK is a signatory to the 1961 Council of Europe treaty which provides for collective passports for young people. Continued acceptance of these passports from those who have ratified the treaty is current practice.

■ Repatriation: Telephone Services

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the current average wait time is for people calling the voluntary returns service to speak to a caseworker.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff her Department employs to work on the voluntary returns service helpline.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[184928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce wait times on the voluntary returns service helpline.

Robert Jenrick:

The information requested on waiting times is not available in a reportable format.

We are actively working to improve the helpline service and do encourage those who are able to access IT to make contact with the service by completing an online application form or sending us information via email.

VRS currently has around 40 caseworkers who divide their time between triage services, including answering the public phone line, processing online application forms and progressing cases to return.

We are currently in the process of recruiting and training additional staff into the Voluntary Returns Service which will assist in reducing waiting times.

■ Visas: Australia

Stephen Farry: [\[185173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with counterparts in the Australian Government on a date for forthcoming changes to the Australian working holiday visa for UK nationals.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK and Australia signed a side letter on mobility in December 2021 alongside the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA), setting out commitments on their respective Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) and Working Holiday Maker (WHM) programmes. The UK and Australia will make changes to these schemes so that they are available to people aged 18 to 35 years inclusive and for a total stay of up to 2 years, with the option to extend for a further year. Australia will also remove the requirement for UK nationals on their programme to undertake specific types of work.

The arrangement states that the UK and Australia will implement these changes within two years of entry into force of the FTA.

We are currently working with the Australian Government on the next steps required to implement these commitments made to extend the provisions of the YMS and WHM.

■ Visas: Families

Stephen Morgan: [\[185087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the support available to families moving to the UK on a student visa.

Robert Jenrick:

Providing support to families moving to the UK on a student visa is not within the remit of the Home Office. It is a requirement of the Student route that applicants demonstrate their ability to support themselves and their dependants financially during their stay in the UK as set out in the [Immigration Rules: Appendix Student](#).

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Drinks

Navendu Mishra: [\[185137\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will make it its policy to ensure that all tea and coffee served on the parliamentary estate has Fairtrade accreditation.

Sir Charles Walker:

All fresh coffee served is Fairtrade certified.

100% of our tea is certified under the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) scheme. For black tea and by value, 85% of the tea we purchase carries Fairtrade accreditation. The remainder is either Rainforest Alliance or UTZ certified.

■ Victoria Tower: Flags

Grahame Morris: [\[185861\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission has had discussions with its counterparts in the House of Lords on arrangements for illuminating the Union Flag at the top of Victoria Tower.

Sir Charles Walker:

There have been no discussions on this matter.

JUSTICE**■ Child Trust Fund: Disability**

Seema Malhotra: [\[185664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish a Green Paper on potential alternatives to the current model of unlocking child trust funds for disabled young people.

Mike Freer:

A consultation seeking views on proposals for accessing limited funds belonging to an individual who lacks mental capacity, which included Child Trust Funds, was published by the Ministry of Justice in November 2021. The response to the consultation was published in February 2023:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/mental-capacity-act-small-payments-scheme>. Copies are available in the House library.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Enfield North

Feryal Clark: [\[185159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the size of the backlog of criminal court cases in Enfield North constituency.

Mike Freer:

The number of outstanding cases at the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court are routinely published as part of the National Statistics release Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly. The latest published data is available to December 2022 and can be found at the following link: [Criminal court statistics quarterly: October to December 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). For the Crown Court, figures are published specifically for London. For magistrates' courts, the North East London Local Justice Area is the closest match available.

The published data for the Crown Court are found here: [Crown Court cases received, disposed and outstanding tool](#), and the published data for the magistrates' court are found here: [Magistrates' courts cases received, disposed and outstanding tool](#).

■ Criminal Proceedings: Video Recordings

Ellie Reeves: [\[185829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the average time for a criminal case to be heard in court via a Section 28 video recording.

Mike Freer:

HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) does not hold information on the average time for a criminal case to be heard in court via Section 28 video recording.

■ Prisoners: Compensation**Ellie Reeves:** [\[185800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what data his Department holds on the amount of compensation paid out in relation to parole hearings.

Damian Hinds:

Prisoners whose parole hearings have been delayed may be eligible to make a claim for compensation against the Parole Board. The Parole Board holds data on the compensation it has paid to eligible prisoners. In 2021-22, the last full year for which data is currently available, the Parole Board paid £86,000 in total in compensation to prisoners.

Ellie Reeves: [\[185801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May to Question 184465 on Parole: Standards, what information his Department holds on the total financial cost of compensation paid in cases where parole board decisions have been successfully challenged in the last ten years.

Damian Hinds:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 May 2023 for [PQ184465](#). Compensation data is not available in the format requested. The response to PQ185800 confirms what compensation data the Parole Board holds.

■ Rape: Victims**Ellie Reeves:** [\[185827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of rape have dropped their case within (a) one month, (b) three months, (c) six months, (d) nine months, (e) 12 months, (f) 18 months and (g) two years of reporting it to the police.

Edward Argar:

Victims can withdraw from their cases at various stages throughout the criminal justice system. We do not hold central data that shows the length of time from victims' initial reports to their withdrawal.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Armed Forces: Housing****Luke Pollard:** [\[185788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether personnel living in Service Family Accommodation will have the same rights and benefits under Social Housing (Regulation) Bill as social housing tenants.

Luke Pollard:

[\[185789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether service family accommodation is covered by the definition of social housing in the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill,

Dehenna Davison:

Under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, passed by the last Labour Government, Service Family Accommodation is run by the Ministry of Defence and defined as social housing.

It is not regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, and will not be impacted by the changes being made by this Bill.

■ **Buildings: Health and Safety**

Geraint Davies:

[\[185728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the British Standard BS 40102-1:2023 entitled Health and well-being and indoor environmental quality in buildings.

Lee Rowley:

I am aware that the British Standard Institute have recently published this new standard and officials are currently reviewing the content.

■ **Community Assets**

Tracey Crouch:

[\[184937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish the Strategy for Community Spaces and Relationships.

Dehenna Davison:

We want to consult and work with local communities and stakeholders to understand how community spaces and relationship could be strengthened. This work will begin in due course.

■ **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Flags**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[184910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will fly the respective county flags on county days.

Dehenna Davison:

The Government attaches great importance to the history and traditions of this country. We have proudly flown county flags above our Headquarters at 2, Marsham Street on county days for several years and will continue to do so as well as flying all county flags on the annual county flag week in Parliament Square.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Public Appointments

Alex Norris: [\[185699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications in total were received for the post of Levelling Up Director.

Alex Norris: [\[185700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many applications each region received for the post of Levelling Up Director.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to Question UIN [185419](#) on 22nd May 2023. As set out at the time, candidates were able to select multiple areas as part of the application process.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

■ Newton-Bhabha Fund: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [\[184969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, how much funding the UK Government provided to the Newton-Bhabha partnership between 2014 and 2023.

George Freeman:

In the period until 2021, UK Government has provided £80m in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Newton-Bhabha partnership. In line with the standard process for reporting Official Development Assistance, spend data for Calendar Years 2022 and 2023 will be available at the publication of the relevant Statistics on International Development (SID) reports

■ Research: Expenditure

Chi Onwurah: [\[184972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to Table 1f of the Office for National Statistics dataset entitled Research and development expenditure by the UK government, whether expenditure by UKRI in the years 2020 and 2021 includes expenditure on the Horizon Europe guarantee scheme.

George Freeman:

The Horizon Europe Guarantee was launched in November 2021, with the first payment being made in 2022. This means that there is no Horizon Europe Guarantee expenditure included in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) dataset for the year 2020 in table 1f or in the calendar year 2021.

The Department expects the ONS tables to include any Horizon Europe Guarantee scheme expenditure as part of UKRI expenditure for future years.

■ Research: Infrastructure**Julian Knight:**[\[185007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what funding her Department is providing to (a) improve research infrastructure and (b) support scientific breakthroughs.

George Freeman:

The Government has committed to increasing public expenditure on R&D to £20 billion per annum by 2024/2025. The total allocation for UK Research and Innovation over the period 2022-2025 is £25.1 billion. This includes £3 billion of investment in infrastructure projects, including £481 million for the new UKRI Infrastructure Fund. This will finance cutting-edge research infrastructure, delivering a step-change in the capabilities available to the next generation of researchers and innovators whilst supporting scientific breakthroughs.

■ Semiconductors: Manufacturing Industries**Bill Esterson:**[\[185777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make a comparative assessment of the impact of the level of Government subsidies available for investment in semiconductor manufacturers in (a) the UK and (b) other countries on that industry in those countries.

Bill Esterson:[\[185778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether her Department plans to take steps to incentivise companies who manufacture semiconductor chips with 2D materials to keep their businesses based in the UK.

Paul Scully:

On Friday 19 May the Government announced its new National Semiconductor Strategy.

Through the Strategy we announced an investment of up to £200 million over the years 2023-25 and up to £1 billion in the next decade.

This builds upon significant support for high-tech enterprise including a £500 million per year package of support for R&D intensive businesses through changes to R&D tax credits announced in the Spring Budget and through 'full expensing' for companies incurring qualifying expenditure on the provision of new plant and machinery.

In addition, this government has already provided funding for both research and innovation in semiconductor technology. Through InnovateUK, we have distributed £214m of grants over the last 10 years directly to SMEs in the semiconductor sector

However, we want to do more to support businesses big and small, and in every part of the sector, to pursue opportunities within the sector that build on our proud history of innovation and strong foundations in this vital technology. We will announce plans

by the autumn to further support the competitiveness of the semiconductor manufacturing sector that is critical to the UK tech ecosystem or the UK's national security.

The full text of the Strategy can be found [here](#).

TRANSPORT

■ Bexleyheath Line: Standards

Sir David Evennett:

[\[185525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on Southeastern train punctuality on the Bexleyheath line since the new timetable was introduced in December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

Southeastern introduced a new timetable on 11 December 2022. Since its introduction punctuality has significantly improved on the Bexleyheath Line.

The following table shows the industry measure of On Time (the percentage of recorded station stops where the train arrived less than one minute later than its advertised time) for each rail period since the new timetable was introduced.

Rail Period Bexleyheath Line

P2310 (10 DEC – 07 JAN)	46.7%
P2311 (08 Jan – 04 Feb)	59.0%
P2312 (05 Feb – 04 Mar)	63.9%
P2313 (05 Mar – 31 Mar)	66.6%
P2401 (01 Apr – 29 Apr)	70.0%

■ Dartford Loop Line: Standards

Sir David Evennett:

[\[185526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on Southeastern train punctuality on the Sidcup line since the new timetable was introduced in December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

Southeastern introduced a new timetable on 11 December 2022. Since its introduction punctuality has significantly improved on the Sidcup Line.

The following table shows the industry measure of On Time (the percentage of recorded station stops where the train arrived less than one minute later than its advertised time) for each rail period since the new timetable was introduced.

Rail Period - Sidcup Line

P2310 (10 DEC – 07 JAN)	61.1%
P2311 (08 Jan – 04 Feb)	62.8%
P2312 (05 Feb – 04 Mar)	67.1%
P2313 (05 Mar – 31 Mar)	70.3%
P2401 (01 Apr – 29 Apr)	73.7%

■ Driving Licences: Ukraine

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[185770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 April 2023 on Question 179857 on Driving Licences: Ukraine, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the time taken to announce whether Ukrainian refugees can continue to use a Ukrainian driving license to drive in the UK on car insurance renewals by Ukrainian refugees.

Mr Richard Holden:

We have not made any assessment on this issue, but we are working at pace and expect to publish the results of the recent consultation shortly.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Damien Moore:

[\[185355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to support the installation of public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in Southport constituency.

Jesse Norman:

To ensure that the transition to electric vehicles takes place in every part of the country, the Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) fund will support local authorities to work with industry to transform the availability of charging for drivers without off-street parking.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, which includes Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, has been allocated £9.65 million in capital funding, and £737,000 in capability (resource) funding through the LEVI Fund. This will enable strategic local provision of public EV infrastructure, particularly for those EV drivers without off-street parking.

Local Authorities can also apply to the £15 million On-Street Residential Chargepoint scheme for support. To date, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council has not applied for these grants.

Data on electric vehicle charging devices in the UK, held by the Department for Transport, is sourced from the electric vehicle charging platform Zapmap. Charging devices not recorded on Zapmap are not included and the accurate number of charging devices may be higher than recorded in these figures. As at 1st April 2023, the Department estimates that there are 12 public charging devices in Southport constituency from this data.

Bill Esterson:

[\[185782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the proportion of public chargepoints that are suitable for commercial vehicles including HGVs that are (a) in operation and (b) planned.

Jesse Norman:

Information on UK's publicly available chargers is published quarterly with the most recent release from April 2023 found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/electric-vehicle-charging-device-statistics-april-2023/electric-vehicle-charging-device-statistics-april-2023#speed-of-charging-devices>. Smaller commercial vehicles, such as vans, can use these charge points.

The Government has announced end of sale dates for new, non-zero emission HGVs. All new HGVs less than or equal to 26 tonnes will be zero emission from 2035, and all new HGVs from 2040. To help the industry to prepare, our zero emission road freight demonstrators are expected to deploy hundreds of zero emission 40-44 tonne HGVs on UK roads and build the associated refuelling and recharging infrastructure needed to support their use.

The Department will also publish a zero emission HGV infrastructure strategy in due course. This will set strategic direction and outline the roles and responsibilities of both government and industry to ensure the delivery of the refuelling and recharging infrastructure required to meet the 2035 and 2040 dates for non-zero emission HGVs.

■ Electric Vehicles: Infrastructure

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[185216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to improve infrastructure for electric vehicles.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is working with industry to improve electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. There are now over 42,000 public chargepoints, alongside hundreds of thousands in homes and workplaces. The Government estimates that by 2030, around 300,000 public chargepoints will be needed as a minimum. The Government expects to see a market-led roll-out for the majority of chargepoints with over £6 billion of investment already committed.

The Government's funding interventions are focused on two sectors: high powered chargers on the strategic road network through the Rapid Charging Fund (RCF) and local on-street charging through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI).

The LEVI fund will support local authorities to work with industry to transform the availability of charging infrastructure for drivers without off-street parking. The Government has announced a further £381 million of LEVI funding (£343 million capital and £37.8 million resource), which will be made available over the next two financial years. The RCF will future-proof the electrical capacity at strategic locations to support ultra-rapid en-route charging.

The Government is also working to improve the experience of people using public chargepoints. In the coming months, the Government will regulate to mandate open data to ensure consumers can locate the right chargepoints for their needs, mandate 99 per cent reliability across each rapid charging network and will aim to introduce contactless payment provision for all new chargepoints over 8kW

Damien Moore:

[\[185354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) cost and (b) estimated timescale for the installation of appropriate equipment to support electric vehicles after 2030.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is aware that the majority of electric vehicle (EV) drivers charge at home and expects this trend to continue. To support those driving long distances and without off-street parking, the Government estimates that by 2030, around 300,000 public chargepoints will be needed as a minimum.

The number of local public chargepoints needed will vary across different areas and over time, depending on the types of chargepoint installed, travel patterns, and consumer preferences.

The Government wants the transition to zero emission vehicles to be consumer and market-led, supported by government measures where appropriate. It will support the commercialisation of chargepoint rollout through its Local EV Infrastructure and Rapid Charging Funds.

■ High Speed 2 Line: Cheshire

Mike Amesbury:

[\[185637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made a recent assessment of the safety of the ground for HS2 (a) Weaver Vale constituency and (b) Cheshire.

Huw Merriman:

HS2 Ltd has reviewed the ground conditions, the associated risks, and the appropriate mitigation measures for the HS2 Phase 2b Western Leg scheme as it passes across the Cheshire Plain in areas of former salt mining and other areas where salt mining is ongoing. Their assessment is published in the 'Crewe to Manchester: Understanding the Ground Risk across the Cheshire Plain' report published on the GOV.UK website on 3 March 2023.

■ High Speed Two: Cheshire

Mike Amesbury: [\[185796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to require HS2 Ltd. to release full ground condition survey reports for the Mid Cheshire area.

Huw Merriman:

HS2 Ltd has produced a report, entitled 'Crewe to Manchester: Understanding the Ground Risk across the Cheshire Plain', which is informed by ground investigation work undertaken so far. This report was published on the GOV.UK website on 3 March 2023.

■ London North Eastern Railway: Fares

Rachael Maskell: [\[185312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the single-leg fare trial at LNER, whether any individual journeys cost passengers more under the trial than they did under the previous fares system.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the single-leg fare trial at LNER, whether any fares for return journeys at (a) peak and (b) off-peak times will cost passengers more than the same journeys did under the previous fares system.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the single-leg fare trial at LNER, whether any single fares will cost passengers more under that trial than they did under the previous fares system.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the single leg pricing trial at LNER, whether that trial has so far led to an increase in the cost of any (a) single and (b) return rail journeys.

Huw Merriman:

Single leg pricing is not about increasing fares, it is an important step in making sure fares are simpler and meet passenger needs. It involves pricing new single fares at roughly half the cost of the old return tickets and then removing returns. This will give passengers the flexibility to mix and match tickets to suit them, such as mixing Advanced with flexible, and peak with off-peak, and make the booking process less complex. Passengers will get the best value ticket for their journey safe in the knowledge a single ticket will always be half the price of an equivalent return. Information on the new single leg priced fares is now publicly available on National Rail Enquires website.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the single-leg fares trial at LNER, what fares will no longer be available for purchase.

Huw Merriman:

Return fares will no longer be offered on most of London North Eastern Railway's network. Where multiple types of off-peak ticket existed, for example off-peak and super off-peak, these have been rationalised to one single off-peak fare. Information on the new single leg priced fares is now publicly available on National Rail Enquires website.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the demand-based pricing trial at LNER, what the maximum increase is that could occur under those plans because of demand-based pricing in any fare compared to the current fare for the same journey expressed (a) proportionately and (b) in absolute monetary terms.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of which fares will be higher compared to current rates due to demand-based pricing by LNER.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has set targets for increased revenue following the implementation of demand-based pricing by LNER.

Rachael Maskell: [\[185321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential increase in revenue generated by LNER through demand-based pricing.

Huw Merriman:

London North Eastern Railway is developing the proposal for the forthcoming trial of demand-based pricing and more details will be announced in due course. We expect demand-based pricing to better manage capacity, as well as raise revenue. We will evaluate the impact of the trial and publish this in due course.

■ M3

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[185717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to London from the M3 at Junction 1 (a) along the A316 and (b) by other routes.

Mr Richard Holden:

The M3 junction 1 is at the edge of the Greater London Authority boundary. The A316 and other routes from the motorway into London are part of London's road network, the responsibility for managing London's road network is shared between Transport for London (TfL) and the London boroughs.

■ Motor Vehicles: Fuels

Damien Moore:

[\[185348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what scientific basis he proposes to exclude vehicles that use energy sources other than electric battery power in his Department's strategy to reduce carbon emissions.

Jesse Norman:

The decarbonisation of road transport is critical in helping the UK to meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and improving air quality. The Government takes a technology neutral approach, with the aim for all new vehicles to be zero emission in line with our phase out dates, without stipulating any particular energy source.

■ Motor Vehicles: Petrol

Damien Moore:

[\[185352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to consult with groups representing motorcyclists on banning the sale of petrol vehicles in the UK.

Jesse Norman:

The Government's public consultation on when to end the sale of new non-zero emission L-category vehicles, i.e. motorcycles and trikes, was open to written responses from 14 July to 21 September 2022. This is being complemented with a thorough programme of stakeholder engagement with manufacturers and the wider industry, including groups representing motorcyclists, led by Ministers.

■ Motorways: Death

Rachael Maskell:

[\[185028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the number of people killed on Smart Motorways as a result of their being no hard shoulder in each year since its introduction.

Mr Richard Holden:

The latest published data shows that, compared to other roads in England, motorways are comparatively the safest roads to travel on. Increasing capacity on our safest roads makes drivers safer overall, and reduces the risk of deaths or serious injury. This is because the extra capacity draws traffic from less safe roads where there are tragically more deaths and injuries.

■ Motorways: Safety

Feryal Clark:

[\[185440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of legally requiring cars that have broken down on motorways to display a hazard sign.

Mr Richard Holden:

Rules relating to road users displaying hazard signs (e.g. warning triangles) in the event of a breakdown are set out in Rule 276 of The Highway Code. Rule 76 advises motorists not to place a warning sign on the carriage if they breakdown on a motorway. This is because priority is for the safety of the vehicle occupants, and, as a matter of urgency, they should move to a safe place away from fast moving traffic.

In line with The Highway Code, National Highways provides guidance to drivers on what to do in the event that their vehicle breaks down on any kind of high-speed road. This was the subject of a major campaign and there is further breakdown advice on their website.

■ Motorways: South East**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[185030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to paragraph 4.13 and Figure 4.2 in the Transport Strategy for the South East, whether his Department has taken steps to establish a link road between the M43 and M4 at (a) the route of the proposed M31 and (b) another route.

Mr Richard Holden:

Traffic between the M4 and M3 to the west of the M25 is served by the A322 and A329(M). Work is underway to develop proposals for future road periods. I would encourage my honourable friend to engage with National Highways as it continues to refine its route strategies, which provide the evidence base for future investment proposals and I would be happy to arrange a meeting between the Honourable Member and National Highways.

■ North Kent Line: Standards**Sir David Evennett:**[\[185527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information his Department holds on Southeastern train punctuality on the Woolwich line since the new timetable was introduced in December 2022.

Huw Merriman:

Southeastern introduced a new timetable on 11 December 2022. Since its introduction punctuality has significantly improved on the Woolwich line.

The following table shows the industry measure of On Time (the percentage of recorded station stops where the train arrived less than one minute later than its advertised time) for each rail period since the new timetable was introduced.

Railway Period - Woolwich Line

P2310 (10 DEC – 07 JAN)	56.3%
P2311 (08 Jan – 04 Feb)	55.9%
P2312 (05 Feb – 04 Mar)	61.8%
P2313 (05 Mar – 31 Mar)	63.6%
P2401 (01 Apr – 29 Apr)	70.4%

■ **Railway Stations: Defibrillators****Feryal Clark:**[\[185452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of railway stations in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London are equipped with defibrillators.

Huw Merriman:

Train stations in Enfield North constituency and the London Borough of Enfield are managed by London Overground, Great Northern or Greater Anglia. Greater Anglia do not currently have defibrillators installed at their stations in the Enfield area but all Great Northern stations are equipped. Information on defibrillators at London Overground stations is a matter for Transport for London.

In London, defibrillators are installed at all 11 stations managed by Network Rail including Waterloo, Euston and Victoria. Train operating companies are also making continuous progress in rolling out defibrillators at the stations they manage.

■ **Railway Stations: Enfield****Feryal Clark:**[\[185162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the train platforms to accommodate longer trains at (a) Enfield Lock and (b) Brimsdown Station.

Huw Merriman:

Greater Anglia operates rail services from Enfield Lock and Brimsdown using 5 and 10 carriage trains at peak times. When the longer 10 carriage trains operate at these stations the trains operate in selective door operation mode meaning that doors do not open where there is no platform edge. Passengers are advised as to which carriages to travel in, depending on their destination. There are currently no plans to extend the train platforms at these stations. Greater Anglia monitors ongoing travel patterns to inform future plans and investment priorities across its network.

■ Railways: Concessions**Dr Jamie Wallis:**[\[185662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department is taking steps to simplify the way Railcards are purchased.

Huw Merriman:

I am committed to further simplifying the way Railcards can be purchased.

Railcards are current available for purchase by eligible passengers through a variety of channels including third-party retailers, online, by telephone and station ticket offices.

Railcards are typically available as a plastic card or digitally using the railcard app on a mobile device, and passengers can buy a one year or a three-year version, depending on their preferences.

■ Railways: Fares**Rachael Maskell:**[\[185316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on rail passengers of rolling out single leg rail pricing across the rail network.

Huw Merriman:

We have committed to carefully considering the results of the LNER single leg pricing rollout before extending more widely. We will evaluate the impact of the extension and publish this in due course.

■ Railways: Tickets**Grahame Morris:**[\[185210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his speech, Building a better railway, published on 16 June 2022, what the evidential basis is for the statement that 1 in 8 rail tickets are sold at ticket offices; and what time period it relates to.

Huw Merriman:

Ticket office usage has declined over the last decade, accounting for 34 per cent of transactions in 2012/13, down to 12 per cent in 2021/22 (the last year for which analysis has been completed) – approximately equal to 1 in 8 tickets. These statistics are based on the Latest Earnings Nationally Networked Overnight (LENNON) data. LENNON is the revenue settlement service for the train operating companies for Great Britain passenger rail ticket sales and is the main source of data on Great Britain's rail fares revenue.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[185515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to promote and facilitate the uptake of new road repair and maintenance technology by local highway authorities in England.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department works closely with the highways sector to promote best practice and to encourage innovation and trialling of new technologies. In 2019, the Department provided £22.9 million for a 'Live Labs' innovation programme, managed by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport (ADEPT), as a way of encouraging innovation across the English local road network.

Based on the previous Live Labs success, the Department has this year confirmed an additional £30 million for a second round of the ADEPT Live Labs programme, with a focus on decarbonising local highways infrastructure and assets to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of local highways maintenance and repair. This will see seven projects, grouped by four interconnected carbon-related themes, being led by local highway authorities working alongside commercial and academic partners.

■ Shipping: Crew

Grahame Morris:

[\[185764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of setting an annual target for the number of UK seafarers (a) Ratings and (b) Officers working in the UK shipping industry.

Mr Richard Holden:

The government is committed to supporting the maritime industry and ensuring high quality training and employment is available for UK seafarers.

We do not intend to set an annual target for the number of UK seafarers. Our work to improve seafarer welfare and the training offer for UK ratings and officers, is the most effective way to attract and retain UK seafarers. This includes the Seafarer Wages Act 2023, our 9 Point-Plan for seafarers, as well as our Ratings and Cadet Reviews.

■ Shipping: Security

Grahame Morris:

[\[185761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of seafarer jobs in the UK which will receive support over the next five years under the National Maritime Security Strategy, published in August 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

The National Strategy for Maritime Security sets out the UK's approach to maritime security over the next 5 years. Whilst the National Strategy for Maritime Security does not specifically cover support for seafarer jobs, it does provide a comprehensive

overview on which government will base future activity, working with industry to tackle security challenges facing the global maritime community

■ Speed Limits

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[185952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits introduced by local authorities.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has not undertaken any recent assessments on 20mph roads. We published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits on 22 November 2018; this may be found [here](#).

The headline findings were:

- There is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.
- In one city centre case study there has been a significant reduction in collisions and casualties.
- 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers

■ UK Centre for Seabed Mapping: Shipping

Grahame Morris: [\[185762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on the number of UK-based seafarer jobs that could be supported by the UK Centre for Seabed Mapping.

Mr Richard Holden:

There has not been a discussion on this specific issue.

TREASURY

■ Domicil

Stephen Kinnock: [\[185618\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the rules on non-domiciled status.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government wants the UK to have a fair, but internationally competitive tax system designed to bring in talented individuals and investment that contributes to the growth of the economy.

Non-domiciled taxpayers play an important role in funding our public services through their UK tax contributions, estimated to be worth almost £7.9 billion a year in the tax

year 2020-2021, and support business growth through the Business Investment Relief scheme, worth over £6 billion since the scheme's introduction in 2012.

■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

Damien Moore:

[\[185353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to balance the potential financial impact of changes to Vehicle Excise Duty from 2025 on owners of (a) internal combustion engine vehicles and (b) electric vehicles with potential national economic impacts.

Gareth Davies:

At Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that from April 2025 electric cars, vans and motorcycles will begin to pay VED in the same way as petrol and diesel vehicles.

The tax treatment for ICE vehicles will remain the same, with those registered after 2017 paying a first-year rate, based on emissions, before moving to a standard annual rate – currently set at £180.

Removing the VED exemption from April 2025 adds fairness to the tax system, and its impact should be minimal given the marginal cost of VED compared to the overall cost of a vehicle. The government has also announced the continuation of incentives for electric vehicles through company car tax, which will likely continue to be effective in incentivising EV take up, and investment in chargepoint infrastructure.

■ Oil: St Kitts and Nevis

John McDonnell:

[\[184877\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation holds on whether oil tankers registered under the St. Kitts and Nevis international ship registry have transported refined oil products from Russia to third countries.

Gareth Davies:

The UK, alongside G7 partners, has introduced unprecedented and wide-ranging sanctions on Russian oil and oil products, and the revenues they generate. The government has moved swiftly to ensure we have the right tools and structures in place to rigorously enforce those sanctions. Alongside our partners, we continue to monitor our oil-related measures and reserve the right to take further action to ensure their effectiveness. UK law requires breaches of sanctions to be reported to HM Treasury, however we do not require reporting from non-UK entities or where the service is outside the scope of the relevant sanctions.

While flagging and registration services are not in scope of the ban on maritime services for the transport of Russian oil and associated oil price cap, the UK government can make use of a process of applying sanctions and deregistration in the event of any circumvention or breach of the maritime services prohibition by UK-flagged ships.

Any UK-flagged vessel which the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to suspect is, has been, or is likely to be, involved in circumventing or breaching the Maritime Services Ban could be deregistered from the UK shipping register.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[185643\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2023 to Question 183901 on Sanitary Protection: VAT, what steps he is taking to assess the potential impact of the removal of VAT on period products; and what his estimated timescale is for the completion of this review.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government keeps all taxes under continuous review and considers a range of evidence, including data and research on factors like pricing, when assessing the effects of changes to the tax system as part of this review process.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Asbestos: Diseases

Imran Hussain:

[\[184402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will provide a breakdown of the number of people in the UK who have been diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases after exposure at work for each year since 2010.

Mims Davies:

The number of people in the UK who have been diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases due to exposure at work is not available as the data is not captured in this way.

However, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Health and Safety Executive collect statistics for deaths and new cases assessed for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) in Great Britain. These statistics can give an indication of the scale of annual new cases of asbestos-related disease, the majority of which are attributable to past exposures at work.

Asbestos-related diseases in Great Britain, deaths and new cases assessed for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB), 2010 onwards, Great Britain

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mesothelioma, deaths	2360	2312	2549	2560	2522	2547	2606	2541	2453	2404	2544	N/A
Mesothelioma, new cases	1895	1985	2125	2145	2215	2130	2170	2025	2230	2025	1910	1920

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
assessed for IIDB												
Asbestosis, deaths	414	429	464	483	436	468	502	519	507	499	530	N/A
Asbestosis, new cases assessed for IIDB	1015	725	980	900	985	1175	1050	955	950	905	275	675
Asbestos-related lung cancer new cases assessed for IIDB	305	315	250	285	285	305	240	180	200	240	185	180
Pleural thickening, new cases assessed for IIDB	505	440	460	430	425	430	370	450	540	510	185	460

Note. Figures for deaths in 2021 are not yet available since for some deaths there can be a substantial delay in their registration beyond the year in which the death occurred.

■ Asbestos: Health Hazards

Imran Hussain:

[\[184410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many employers have been fined for failing to protect their employees from asbestos exposure in each year since 2010.

Mims Davies:

The risks from asbestos are to both employees and non-employees so the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not separate the two. Asbestos-specific offences may also be grouped together with other offences and prosecuted under the general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The numbers of fines imposed only under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 and 2012 for each

year from 2010 are set out below but other penalties are available and used by the courts:

YEAR*	NUMBER OF FINES
2010 - 2011	20
2011 - 2012	21
2012 - 2013	21
2013 - 2014	15
2014 - 2015	13
2015 - 2016	20
2016 - 2017	5
2017 - 2018	11
2018 - 2019	16
2019 - 2020	7
2020 - 2021	0
2021 - 2022	4
2022 - 2023	2

■ Child Maintenance Service

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[185200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Sixth Report of the Work and Pensions Committee of Session 2022-23, Children in poverty: Child Maintenance Service, HC 272, published on 27 April 2023, if he will make it his policy to launch a public inquiry into assessments from the Child Maintenance Service.

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[185201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Sixth Report of the Work and Pensions Committee of Session 2022-23, Children in poverty: Child Maintenance Service, HC 272, published on 27 April 2023, if he will take steps to create a compensation package for people incorrectly assessed by the Child Maintenance Service.

Mims Davies:

The Child Maintenance Service welcomes the Work and Pensions Select Committee report and are considering the recommendations. We will provide a response in due course.

■ Child Trust Fund: Disability

Seema Malhotra: [\[185665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) external stakeholders on accessing disabled young people's child trust funds.

Tom Pursglove:

The Secretary of State has had no discussions with Cabinet colleagues or external stakeholders about accessing Child Trust Funds.

■ Cost of Living Payments

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[185826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what percentage of qualifying recipients have received the first 2023 Cost of Living payment as of 18 May 2023.

Mims Davies:

Across government, 8.3 million payments have been made. As of 3 May 2023, over 99% of DWP claimants initially eligible for the first means-tested benefits Cost of Living payment have had their payments processed.

The information which will be updated as new payments are made can be found [here](#).

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Artificial Intelligence

David Linden: [\[185338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department uses automated decision making.

Mims Davies:

The Department does use automated decision making in some services and processes, which allows us to improve accuracy, speed up delivery and free up colleagues' time so they can support the people who need it most. Review or appeal options are built in to all DWP benefit processes, even where this is not specifically required by data protection laws.

The Department is always careful to process data lawfully, proportionately, and ethically with safeguards for the protection of individuals. DWP does not use Artificial Intelligence for automated decision making.

[DWP's Personal Information Charter](#) explains how and why we use personal information and citizen's rights and responsibilities.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services**Seema Malhotra:**[\[185260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to reduce call waiting times on the benefit enquiry line.

Mims Davies:

DWP plans resourcing according to forecasted telephony demand in an effort to keep wait times down. Wait time performance and forecasted demand is frequently reviewed, and DWP is continually working to improve the service that it delivers. The Benefit Enquiry Line (0800 169 0310) freephone service which supports Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Jobseekers Allowance and Income Support, is delivered by multiskilled colleagues, who are able to flex between lines to balance customer wait times. We are aware that the line is currently experiencing high wait times for ESA enquiries, although these can vary throughout the day, and we are working to improve this position.

The Department is investing in a new capability that aims to better route customers to the right offer at the right time. This will reduce the time callers spend listening to a menu of choices and instead invite customers to say why they are calling, at the start of the call.

■ Disability History Month**Alex Sobel:**[\[185089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department is taking steps to promote UK Disability History Month.

Tom Pursglove:

Disability History Month will run from November 16th - December 16th in 2023. The Disability Unit is currently developing plans to mark the month.

To mark the month in 2022, we used a range of social media posts to celebrate individuals and their contribution to the advancement of rights for disabled people. We anticipate that we will take a similar approach this year.

■ Food Banks: Greater London**Feryal Clark:**[\[185157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department have made of trends in the distribution of food parcels in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) the London Borough of Enfield and (c) London.

Mims Davies:

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and HM Government does not have any role in their operation. As such, data on trends in the distribution of food parcels in Enfield North constituency, the London Borough of Enfield and London is not available.

This government is committed to understanding and addressing poverty which is why we have published official estimates of foodbank use for the first time in March 2023.

National statistics on food bank use for 2021/22 are available [here](#). We aim to publish statistics for 2022/23 in March 2024.

In 2021/22, 3% of individuals, or 2.1m people, were living in households where a food bank has been used in the 12 months prior to the interview.

In 2021/22, 2% of households in London used a foodbank in the 12 months prior to the interview.

Statistics are not available at the constituency level.

This Government is committed to a sustainable long-term approach to tackling poverty and supporting people on lower incomes. We will spend around £276bn through the welfare system in 2023/24, including around £124bn on people of working age and children and around £152 billion on pensioners. Of this, around £79 billion will be spent on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions. (GB, includes non-DWP spend, prices in 23-24 terms).

Over 8 million UK households on eligible means tested benefits will receive additional Cost of Living Payments totalling up to £900 this financial year. Over 99% of initially eligible households have now been sent their first payment of £301 and more than eight million pensioner households across the UK will receive an additional £300 Cost of Living Payment during winter 2023-24 and over 6 million people across the UK on eligible 'extra-costs' disability benefits will receive a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment this summer 2023, to help with the additional costs they face.

For those who require extra support Government is also providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable a year-long extension of the Household Support Fund in England this financial year. This is on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £2.5 billion. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding. The London borough of Enfield been allocated £5,695,989 for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 to support those most in need with the cost of essentials, including those who may not be eligible for other Government support.

■ Jobcentres

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[185831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data is collected by Jobcentres on employment outcomes of claimants.

Guy Opperman:

DWP uses data on claimants' earnings from HMRC Real Time Information from Pay As You Earn system and Universal Credit data to assess employment outcomes of claimants.

■ Offshore Industry: Training

Olivia Blake: [\[185655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 on basic safety training requirements for (a) self-employed and (b) directly employed staff working in the offshore (i) oil and gas and (ii) wind sectors.

Mims Davies:

Both the Oil & Gas and Wind Sectors require mandatory training for directly and self-employed personnel working in these sectors. This training comprises of BOSIET (Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training) and GWO (Global Wind Organisation) courses where completion information is recorded in a national industry database which provides a record of an individual's training status.

HSE retain oversight of non-mandatory training associated with an individual's competence to undertake their role via inspection activities across both sectors.

■ Pension Credit: Applications

Ms Harriet Harman: [\[185192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time taken is for pensioners to receive an outcome of their pension credit application.

Laura Trott:

The Average Actual Clearance Time as at April 2023 for a new claim to Pension Credit is 34.1 days.

Source: Output from Customer Account Management System (CAM)

■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

Julian Knight: [\[185011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of its work to decrease benefit fraud.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the Hon Member to the Written Statement [HCWS765](#) made on 11 May, in relation to the annual statistics for Fraud and Error in the Benefit System for the financial year ending 2023, published that day.

These statistics confirm that fraud fell to 2.7% (£6.4bn) of benefit expenditure during that period.

■ Universal Credit

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[185384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 10 May 2023 to Question 183797 on Universal Credit, for what reason have the capital limits for Universal Credit not been adjusted to account for inflation.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to change Universal Credit capital limits.

■ **Universal Credit: Self-employed**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[185790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of the impact of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed Universal Credit claimants on expenditure by his Department in the financial years (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not available and would only be possible at disproportionate cost.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace: USA

Fleur Anderson:

[\[185131\]](#)

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

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 May 2023. The correct answer should have been:

David Rutley:

The Iranian Government is responsible for persistent, widespread and serious human rights violations and can have no international credibility in this sphere. This is why we worked with partners in December to ensure Iran was expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The Social Forum is a subsidiary body of the UN Human Rights Council which the UK does not traditionally attend. The chair rotates between members' ambassadors according to region and this year is the turn of the Asia-Pacific region. The UK will continue to work closely with our partners to hold Iran to account in international fora; to that end we regularly meet with UN representatives, both in the UK and overseas through UK Missions in Geneva, New York and around the world.

The Foreign Secretary has regular discussions with his US counterpart about the Middle East Peace Process, most recently at the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting in April. The UK Government remains in close contact with the US Government about the US Middle East Partnership for Peace Act and how existing peace-building projects and funding can better support the goals of this Act. We share the objective of advancing economic, social, and political connections, and peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians. We stand ready to collaborate and coordinate further, including regarding the Act's Advisory Board, as additional information about its plans and priorities become available.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Data Sharing under the Digital Economy Act 2017

Parliamentary Secretary (Alex Burghart):

[\[HCWS802\]](#)

This Government is committed to transforming the delivery of public services, so that they are easier to use, joined-up and provide better value for money to the taxpayer. To this end, the Cabinet Office has today published the Government's response to the public consultation on new data sharing regulations, which will help more people prove who they are online so that they can access the services they need simply and quickly.

From January to March 2023, the Government consulted on draft regulations to improve data sharing so that people may more easily access public services online. The regulations would create a new objective under the Digital Economy Act 2017 for this purpose, allowing controlled data sharing between a number of public bodies already specified in the Act and with four additional organisations: the Cabinet Office, the Department for Transport, the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Disclosure and Barring Service. These public bodies either hold information that can be used to verify someone is who they say they are, and/or require the outcome of such checks in order to provide access to their services. The proposed legislation would enable data sharing between the specified organisations only for the purpose of helping someone confirm their identity, when they are requesting access to a government service online. All data sharing under the regulations would continue to comply with robust existing data protection legislation.

Every response has been read and the Government thanks those respondents who expressed their views through the consultation. The devolved administrations support the proposed regulations.

The Government is clear that there isn't public support for national identity cards in the UK and this is not something proposed in, or enabled by, this legislation. Where responses did engage with the specific consultation questions, they highlighted the wider potential benefits of the data sharing regulations, including to physical health and social well-being, and we will make a minor amendment on this basis. The Government has also proposed that the draft regulations would come into force 21 days after, rather than the day after, being approved by Parliament.

The UK Government intends to take forward legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows. I have asked that the Government response be deposited in the libraries of both Houses in Parliament and published on GOV.UK.

EDUCATION**■ Children's Social Care Update**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children, Families and Wellbeing (Claire Coutinho): [\[HCWS792\]](#)

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care was published a year ago today, setting out plans to reset children's social care in England so it delivers for all the children and families it supports. This statement updates the House on progress made in implementing the recommendations set out in that Review.

Around the same time as the Independent Review, two further reviews were published: the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report into the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, and the Competition and Markets Authority's study of children's social care. These reviews also called for urgency in bringing forward reform, specifically to ensure the child protection system keeps children safe, and the care system provides the right homes for children in the right places. Together, the three reviews provide a platform for fundamental, whole system change.

My predecessor, the Member for Colchester started us on the journey towards reform a year ago. He committed in his Oral Statement to publish an ambitious and detailed implementation strategy setting out this Government's plans for reform.

The Department published plans for reform in our *'consultation and implementation strategy: Stable Homes, Built on Love'* on 2nd February 2023. We set out how we will help families overcome challenges, keep children safe, and make sure children in care have stable loving homes, long-term loving relationships, and opportunities for a good life. Alongside this strategy, we announced £200 million investment for these reforms, which builds on an annual investment of over £10 billion in children's social care. The *Built on Love* strategy and its funding cover Phase One of our reforms, addressing urgent issues and laying the foundations for wider-reaching reforms.

'Built on Love' sets out six pillars with actions to transform the system. We are seeking to:

- provide the right support at the right time, so that children thrive within their families and families stay together through our family help offer;
- strengthen our child protection response by getting agencies to work together in a fully integrated way, led by social workers with greater skills and knowledge;
- unlock the potential of kinship care so that, wherever possible, children who cannot stay with their parents are cared for by people who know and love them already;
- make sure the care system has the right homes for children in the right places, and that we provide children in care and care leavers with the right support to help them thrive and achieve their potential into adulthood;
- provide a valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one; and

- make sure the whole system continuously learns and improves and makes better use of evidence and data.

Through this statement, I am also pleased to inform colleagues of progress against day one commitments made to this House a year ago:

- We committed to develop a National Children’s Social Care Framework. We have published our Framework, consulted on it, and intend to issue it as statutory guidance by the end of this year.
- We committed to introduce an Early Career Framework for child & family social workers, to give them the best start in the profession. We have set out plans to invest in high-quality early career development, have begun the process of writing the Framework document setting out the knowledge and skills social workers need at different stages, and recently invited local authorities to express interest in becoming early adopters of our Early Career Framework this year to help us co-design the programme.
- We committed to work with local authorities to recruit more foster carers. Through ‘Built on Love’ we have pledged to invest over £27 million over the next two years to recruit and retain more foster carers, and are working on plans in the North East to test targeted regional communications campaigns and invest in models that we know work.
- We committed to improve data sharing between safeguarding partners. We have introduced a Data and Digital Solutions Fund to help local authorities improve delivery for children and families through technology.
- We committed to set up a Child Protection Ministerial Group and establish a National Implementation Board. We have set up both forums to champion safeguarding at the highest levels and to receive advice, support and challenge us on the delivery of children’s social care reform.

This action is only the beginning. Just last week, consultations closed on our proposals for reform, our draft Children’s Social Care National Framework and Data Dashboard, and our plan for addressing the high use of agency social workers in the workforce. Thousands of people engaged and responded to the consultations – including those with personal experience of the care system, dedicated professionals providing key services, and civil society. A Government Response will be published in September.

The Prime Minister set out that building a brighter future requires us to value family, in whatever form that takes, recognising the common bond is love. Reform of children’s social care is at the heart of that brighter future. I look forward to continuing to work across both Houses, and all parties, as we lay the foundations for a new system.

■ Condition Improvement Fund Update

The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):

[\[HCWS797\]](#)

My Noble Friend, the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for the School System and Student Finance (Baroness Barran) has made the following statement.

1. Today, I am announcing the allocation of almost £456 million for 1,033 Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) projects across 859 academies, sixth-form colleges and voluntary aided schools across England to maintain and improve the condition of the education estate.
1. This funding is provided to enable schools to deliver well maintained and safe facilities that support a high-quality education. Since March 2015 CIF has delivered over 11,000 projects and continues to deliver over 1,200 projects across the school estate with essential maintenance projects.
1. The CIF funding allocated for projects by region is:
 - East Midlands - £41,964,017
 - East of England - £81,316,668
 - London - £58,711,968
 - North East - £8,434,081
 - North West - £58,450,018
 - South East - £106,179,820
 - South West - £23,104,444
 - West Midlands - £37,930,631
 - Yorkshire and the Humber - £39,738,336
1. Amounts of funding awarded to individual schools are not being published, as publishing this information would undermine the school's ability to obtain best value from contractors. However, funding information on completed CIF projects is available to view on GOV.UK.

Details of today's announcement are being sent to all CIF applicants and a list of successful projects will be published on GOV.UK. Copies will be placed in the House Library.

■ Tutoring Update

The Minister of State for Schools (Nick Gibb):

[\[HCWS798\]](#)

The Department for Education will today announce the arrangements for the fourth and final year of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in England, which starts in September 2023. The NTP makes available subsidised tutoring for schools as part of a Government commitment to narrowing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. By the conclusion of the programme we will have invested more than £1 billion to deliver tutoring, which evidence shows is one of the most effective ways to accelerate academic progress.

Today's announcement includes a change to funding arrangements from those previously put before the House. We have increased for the forthcoming academic year the subsidy for the programme, which means that schools can use their NTP funding to cover up to 50% of the cost of the tutoring they deliver instead of the previously announced 25%.

This means that schools need to use less of their own money to be able to provide high-quality tutoring through NTP. We have made this change in response to feedback from schools and to ensure that the maximum possible amount of tutoring is delivered in academic year 2023/24.

We have retained from this year the main elements of the current delivery approach, giving schools consistency to plan for next year. This will see us continue to provide schools with the flexibility to design a tutoring programme that meets the needs of their pupils through the existing three tutoring routes. While tutoring is available for all pupils, we expect schools to focus on those who are disadvantaged and in receipt of pupil premium or those who are below the expected standard or good pass in an applicable subject.

This information is available to schools via the academic year 2023/24 NTP guidance, which is published today. Alongside the guidance, we have published information on the funding each school will receive and a calculator tool to support schools to plan tutoring starting in September.

As we prepare for the final year of NTP, we aim to build on the success of the programme to date, which has seen over 3.4million courses delivered and close to 90% of schools participating.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Extension of the Ivory Act 2018

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):
[\[HCWS790\]](#)

Today the Government is announcing it will extend the Ivory Act 2018 to hippopotamus, walrus, narwhal, killer whale (orca) and sperm whale, delivering on a key animal welfare manifesto commitment. These species are set to receive greater legal protections under the UK's world-leading ban on importing, exporting and dealing in items containing ivory.

Putting the UK at the forefront of global conservation efforts, today's consultation response confirms plans to extend the Ivory Act 2018 to ban all dealing in ivory from these species, including imports and exports.

The Ivory Act is one of the toughest bans on elephant ivory sales in the world, with some of the strongest enforcement measures. Those found guilty of breaching the ban face tough penalties including an unlimited fine or up to five years in jail.

The five species are all listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES), which regulates their trade internationally, and hippopotamus, walrus and sperm whale are listed as vulnerable on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list.

The announcement today comes following an extensive public consultation and with the one-year anniversary of the successful ivory ban approaching.

The ban allows for a small number of exemptions with the digital ivory service allowing those who own ivory to register or apply for an exemption certificate. People will only need to register or certify items for the purposes of dealing in exempt items containing ivory. Those who own but are not planning to sell their ivory items do not need to register or certify them.

Since 6 June 2022, there has been over 6,500 registrations and certificates issued for exempted items so that they continue to form part of our artistic and cultural heritage.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Membership of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA)

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Europe) (Leo Docherty): [\[HCWS794\]](#)

The Hon. Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood MP).

The Hon. Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

The Rt Hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie MP).

The Hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Wolverhampton South West (Stuart Anderson MP).

The Baroness Meyer CBE has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Lord Godson.

The Hon. Member for Stirling (Alyn Smith MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in place of the Hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Philippa Whitford MP).

■ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Europe) (Leo Docherty): [\[HCWS793\]](#)

The Hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook MP) has been appointed as a full representative of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Yeovil (Marcus Fysh MP).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Statutory Guidance for NHS England on the Protection of Confidential Patient Information**

Minister of State (Minister for Health and Secondary Care) (Will Quince):
[[HCWS799](#)]

My Hon. friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for the Lords) (Lord Markham) has made the following Written Statement:

Today, the Department of Health and Social Care publishes its guidance that sets out how NHS England will protect patient data, following the transfer of NHS Digital's responsibilities. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-englands-protection-of-patient-data>.

On 1 February, NHS Digital legally became part of NHS England, creating a single, central authority responsible for all elements of digital technology, data and transformation for the NHS.

NHS Digital was a powerful force for change in the NHS and guardian of its key data IT and data systems. These IT systems and its expert staff transferred to NHS England.

Laura Wade-Gery was commissioned by the Government to lead an independent review of how we can ensure digital technology and the effective use of data is at the heart of transforming the NHS. Her report 'Putting data, digital and tech at the heart of transforming the NHS', published in November 2021, recommended merging the functions of NHS Digital into NHS England, to provide a single statutory body for data, digital and technology to provide the right leadership and support to Integrated Care Systems.

This integration is an important step in bringing together in a single place, the essential systems and programmes to digitally transform the NHS, and to harness the full potential of data. It will enable health and social care services to use digital and data more effectively to deliver improved patient outcomes and address the key challenges we face.

In harnessing the full potential of data to digital transform the NHS, this statutory guidance makes clear that NHS England should maintain high standards of data protection, information governance, and transparency, as NHS Digital did, to demonstrate that it is a trustworthy custodian of health and care data. NHS England must have regard to this guidance and also undertake an annual review of how effectively it has discharged the data functions transferred over from NHS Digital.

HOME OFFICE**■ Immigration update****The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Suella Braverman):**
[\[HCWS800\]](#)

The Government committed to bringing net migration down in the 2019 manifesto and remains committed to doing so. In December 2020, we ended decades of uncontrolled migration from the European Union and put in place a new points-based immigration system to give ministers full control of our borders. For the first time since we joined the EU, we gained complete control of who comes to the UK and the ability to operate an immigration system that we can flex to the changing needs of the economy and labour market, as well as tailor to the skills and talent needed by UK businesses and our NHS.

But immigration is dynamic, and we must constantly iterate our approach to take account of changing migrant flows and respond to evidence of abuse or unintended consequences. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published data in November 2022 which estimated that net migration in the year June 2021 to June 2022 was at 504,000 - up significantly on the previous year, and higher than pre-Brexit volumes. They partly attributed this rise to temporary factors – such as a post-Covid surge and safe and legal routes, like the UK's Ukraine and Hong Kong schemes.

The immigration statistics also highlighted an unexpected rise in the number of dependants coming to the UK alongside international students. Around 136,000 visas were granted to dependants of sponsored students in the year ending December 2022, a more than eight-fold increase from 16,000 in 2019, when the Government's commitment to lower net migration was made. This does not detract from the considerable success that the Government and the higher education sector have had in achieving the goals from our International Education Strategy, meeting our target to host 600,000 international students studying in the UK per year by 2030, for two years running, and earlier than planned – a success story in terms of economic value and exports.

The International Education Strategy plays an important part in supporting the economy through the economic contribution students can bring to the UK, but this should not be at the expense of our commitment to the public to lower overall migration and ensure that migration to the UK is highly skilled and therefore provides the most benefit. The proposals we are announcing today will ensure that we can continue to meet our International Education Strategy commitments, while making a tangible contribution to reducing net migration to sustainable levels. The terms of the graduate route remain unchanged.

Following close working with the Department for Education and HM Treasury, I am pleased to announce a package of measures to help deliver our goal of falling net migration, while supporting the Government's priority of growing the economy.

This package includes:

1. Removing the right for international students to bring dependants unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes.

2. Removing the ability for international students to switch out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed.
3. Reviewing the maintenance requirements for students and dependants.
4. Steps to clamp down on unscrupulous education agents who may be supporting inappropriate applications to sell immigration not education.
5. Better communicating immigration rules to the higher education sector and to international students.
6. Improved and more targeted enforcement activity.

We are committed to attracting the brightest and the best to the UK. Therefore, our intention is to work with universities over the course of the next year to design an alternative approach that ensures that the best and the brightest students can bring dependants to our world leading universities, while continuing to reduce net migration. We will bring in this system as soon as possible, after thorough consultation with the sector and key stakeholders.

This package strikes the right balance between acting decisively on tackling net migration and protecting the economic benefits that students can bring to the UK. Now is the time for us to make these changes to ensure an impact on net migration as soon as possible. We expect this package to have a tangible impact on net migration. Taken together with the easing of temporary factors, we expect net migration to fall to pre-pandemic levels in the medium term.

We recognise that no one single measure will control immigration. As the impacts of temporary pressures becomes clearer, we will keep matters under review. The Government will seek to continue to strike the balance between reducing overall net migration with ensuring that businesses have the skills they need and we continue to support economic growth. Those affected by this package will predominantly be dependants of students who make a more limited contribution to the economy than students or those coming under the Skilled Worker route, minimising the impact on UK growth.

■ **Publication of Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board annual report**

The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp): [\[HCWS796\]](#)

I am pleased to announce that I am, today, publishing the Annual Report of the Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board for 2021-22. This report covers the National DNA Database and the National Fingerprints Database.

The Strategy Board Chair, DCC Ben Snuggs, has presented the Annual Report to the Home Secretary. Publication of the Report is a statutory requirement under section 63AB(8) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 as inserted by section 24 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The Report shows the important contribution that the National DNA and fingerprint databases (policing collections) make to supporting policing and solving crimes. I am grateful to the Strategy Board for their commitment to fulfilling their statutory functions.

The Report has been laid before the House and copies will be available from the Vote Office and on GOV.UK.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Elections Act: Postal and proxy voting safeguards

Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison):

[\[HCWS791\]](#)

My Honourable friend the Minister for Faith and Communities (Baroness Scott of Brybrook) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I have published the draft statutory instrument “The Representation of the People (Postal and Proxy Voting etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2023” with an accompanying explanatory memorandum. An impact assessment has been drafted and will be available when a draft of the statutory instrument is laid.

The changes set out in these regulations deliver on our manifesto commitment to protect the integrity of our democracy, as legislated for by Parliament through the Elections Act 2022. It is paramount that we preserve trust in our electoral processes and ensure elections remain secure well into the future. The Elections Act stemmed from recommendations made by (then) Sir Eric Pickles and his review into tackling electoral fraud. Voter identification has already been commenced; these regulations now commence provisions relating to postal and proxy voting.

Under these regulations, we are introducing appropriate safeguards to reduce the opportunity for individuals to exploit the absent voting process and steal votes. The new measures limit the total number of electors for whom a person may act as a proxy to four, of which no more than two can be for ‘domestic’ electors for all constituencies or electoral areas.

To further strengthen the security of the ballot, an identity check will be introduced for all applications for an absent vote. This change will apply to applications made on paper and online and bring the absent vote application process in line with the Individual Electoral Registration ‘Register to Vote’ process. This change accompanies a new requirement to reapply for a postal vote at least every three years, replacing the current five-year signature and date of birth refresh. Transitional processes will be in place for electors with existing postal or proxy vote arrangements.

These regulations will also support the delivery of a new digital service which will enable electors to apply for a postal or proxy arrangement online. The Government anticipates that an online service will alleviate some of the pre-existing challenges for electors and electoral administrators, by reducing the need to rely on manual processes. The online service is currently being built and will be tested to ensure it is robust and accessible for electors.

Although this statutory instrument does not directly relate to Brexit, it does make amendments to 2001 regulations which were made in part under the European Communities Act. In that light, the statutory instrument is published in accordance with

the procedure required by Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and agreed with Parliament. The statutory instrument is being published in draft at least 28 days before being laid in draft to be considered under the affirmative procedure in Parliament.

These Regulations will apply to UK Parliamentary elections and other reserved elections, referendums and recall petitions. Local elections in Scotland, and local elections in Wales apart from Police and Crime Commissioner elections, are devolved, and thus not in scope of these measures.

■ Planning for accommodation for looked after children

Minister of State for Housing and Planning (Rachel Maclean): [\[HCWS795\]](#)

I, with the support of my Rt Hon colleague the Secretary of State for Education, wish to set out the Government's commitment to support the development of accommodation for looked after children, and its delivery through the planning system.

The planning system should not be a barrier to providing homes for the most vulnerable children in society. When care is the best choice for a child, it is important that the care system provides stable, loving homes close to children's communities. These need to be the right homes, in the right places with access to good schools and community support. It is not acceptable that some children are living far from where they would call home (without a clear child protection reason for this), separated from the people they know and love.

Today we use this joint statement to remind Local Planning Authorities that, as set out in paragraph 62 of the National Planning Policy Framework, local planning authorities should assess the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community and reflect this in planning policies and decisions. Local planning authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to include accommodation for children in need of social services care as part of that assessment.

Local planning authorities should give due weight to and be supportive of applications, where appropriate, for all types of accommodation for looked after children in their area that reflect local needs and all parties in the development process should work together closely to facilitate the timely delivery of such vital accommodation for children across the country. It is important that prospective applicants talk to local planning authorities about whether their service is needed in that locality, using the location assessment (a regulatory requirement and part of the Ofsted registration process set out in paragraph 15.1 of the Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations) to demonstrate this.

To support effective delivery, unitary authorities should work with commissioners to assess local need and closely engage to support applications, where appropriate, for accommodation for looked after children as part of the authority's statutory duties for looked after children. In two tier authorities, we expect local planning authorities to support these vital developments where appropriate, to ensure that children in need of accommodation are provided for in their communities.

Children's homes developments

Planning permission will not be required in all cases of development of children's homes, including for changes of use from dwelling houses in Class C3 of the Use Classes Order 1987 where the children's home remains within Class C3 or there is no material change of use to Class C2. An application to the local planning authority can be made for a lawful development certificate to confirm whether, on the facts of the case, the specific use is or would be lawful. Where a Certificate is issued, a planning application would not be required for the matters specified in the certificate.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS803\]](#)

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government changes.

First, responsibility for the delivery of the Windsor Framework will be transferred from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to sit alongside the existing Northern Ireland Unit in the Cabinet Office. The Foreign Secretary remains responsible for UK/EU relations and will continue as co-chair of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement Partnership Council and Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee – the body that oversees the UK and EU implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Second, the UK Governance team will formally move from the Cabinet Office into the Union and Devolution team in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This will consolidate matters relating to intergovernmental relations, including Common Frameworks, under the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations. This is an administrative change that does not affect ministerial responsibilities.

Both the Windsor Framework and Union teams in the Cabinet Office and DLUHC respectively will be brought together under a single official reporting structure to allow for more effective join-up across all union policy. These changes will take effect immediately.

Third, sponsorship of HM Land Registry and its associated bodies will move from the Department for Business and Trade to DLUHC. This will aid the delivery of DLUHC's key policy objectives including improving the home buying and selling process and delivering the land transparency provisions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. This change will take effect on 1 June 2023.

Fourth, ministerial responsibility for civil Earth Observation (EO) policy and its associated EU programme will be consolidated in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Bringing responsibility for EO policy into a single department will enable greater flexibility to support the UK space sector and to make decisions about investments into science

programmes. Defra will retain an interest by leading on the EO development of environmental, agricultural and natural resource applications. This change will take effect on 1 July 2023.

Fifth, responsibility for the delivery of the Supporting Families programme will transfer from DLUHC to the Department for Education. This transfer provides an opportunity to expand the impact of the programme by bringing together the system of support for children and families. This will enable the Education Secretary to deliver a coordinated approach through a series of reforms that support the Government's wider social policy agenda. This change will take effect on 1 April 2024.

Finally, departmental sponsorship of UK Shared Business Services has been formally transferred to DSIT following the BEIS Transfer of Functions Order formalised on 3 May 2023.

TREASURY

■ Financial services update

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Andrew Griffith): [\[HCWS801\]](#)

I can inform the House that on 22 May 2023 the government sold c.469m shares in NatWest Group (NWG, formerly Royal Bank of Scotland) to NWG by way of a directed buyback transaction. The transaction value amounts to approximately £1.26bn, representing approximately 4.95% of the company.

This announcement demonstrates the continued progress being made towards the government's intention to return its shareholding in NWG to private ownership by 2025-26, subject to market conditions and achieving value for money for taxpayers. Following this transaction, the government's shareholding stands at approximately 38.6%.

Policy rationale

The government is committed to returning NWG to full private ownership now that the original policy objective for the intervention in NWG – to preserve financial and economic stability at a time of crisis – has long been achieved.

The government only conducts sales of NWG shares when it represents value for money to do so and market conditions allow.

Directed buyback detail

The government, supported by advice from UK Government Investments, concluded that selling shares to NWG, in a single bilateral transaction, represented value for money.

Share buybacks are a common practice undertaken by companies looking to efficiently deploy their excess capital. NWG has shareholder approval to purchase up to 4.99% of its share capital from HMT on a rolling 12-month basis. This is the third sale of shares via an off-market share sale directly to the company and sixth large block sale of NWG shares undertaken by the government.

The sale concluded on 22 May 2023, with NWG purchasing a limited number of its government owned shares. A total of approximately 469m shares (approximately 4.95% of the bank) were sold at the 19 May market closing price of 268.4p per share. The government's shareholding now stands at approximately 38.6%. The reduction in the government's shareholding is less than the percentage sold as NWG will cancel most of the purchased shares.

Details of the sale are summarised below.

GOVERNMENT STAKE IN NWG PRE-SALE	c.3,949M SHARES
Total shares sold to NWG	c.469m shares
Share price at market close on 19/05/2023	268.4p
Total proceeds from the sale	c.£1.26bn
Government stake in NWG post-sale (as % of total voting rights)	c.38.6%

Fiscal impacts

The net impacts of the sale on a selection of fiscal metrics are summarised as follows:

<i>METRIC</i>	<i>IMPACT</i>
Net sale proceeds	c.£1.26bn
Retention value range	Within the valuation range
Public Sector Net Borrowing	Nil. There may be future indirect impacts as a result of the sale. The sale proceeds reduce public sector debt. All else being equal, the sale will reduce future debt interest costs for government. The reduction in government's shareholding means it will not receive future dividend income it may otherwise have been entitled to through these shares.
Public Sector Net Debt	Reduced by c.£1.26bn
Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities	Nil
Public Sector Net Liabilities	Nil